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THE IMPOSSIBLE INTELLIGENCE
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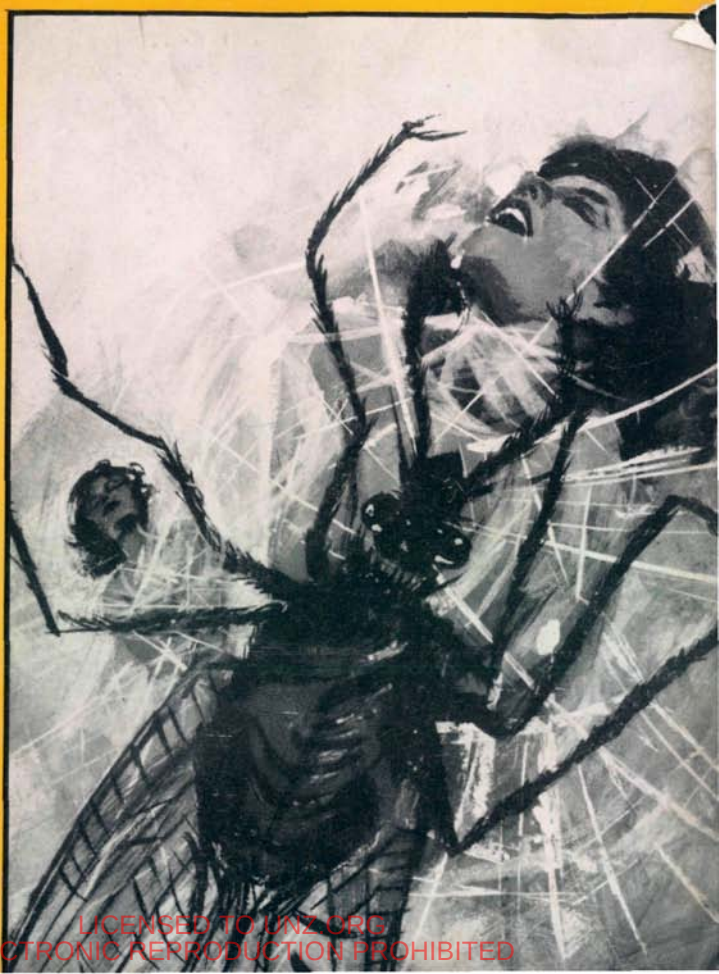
THE DEADLIEST GAME-- WHEN ALIEN POW'S ARE

THE HUNTED ONES
by Mack Reynolds



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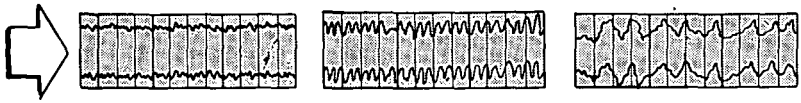

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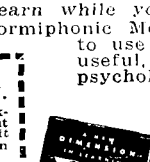

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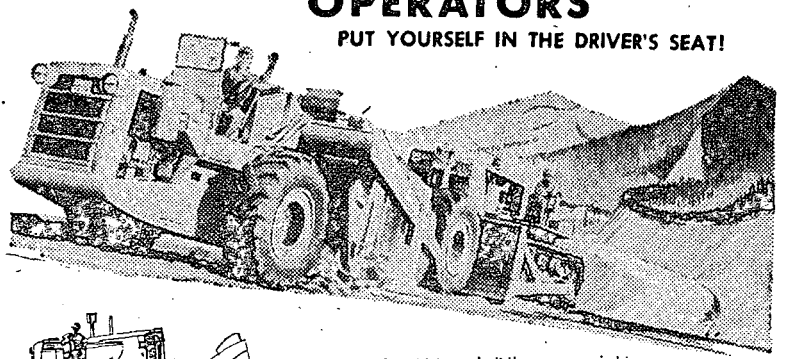

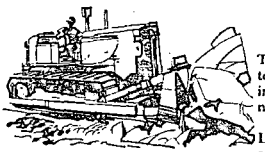

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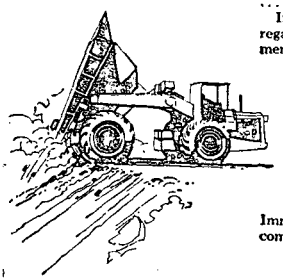

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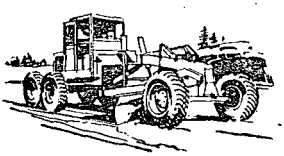

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THE ORIGINAL SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

VOLUME 10 NOVEMBER, 1959 NUMBER 5

NOVELET

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Denebian prisoners of war were always turned loose in the swamps—so citizens could hunt them. But all weren't killed, and when hunted man met hunted woman, the turning point began—a point that would rock Earth's complacent superiority to its core.

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Editor: ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES MARIE A. PARK, Asso. Ed.
DOROTHY B. SEADOR, Asso. Ed.

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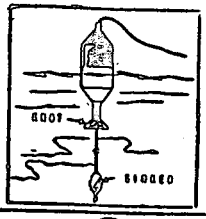

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The Impossible Intelligence

by Robert Silverberg

illustrated by Emsh

What was the connection between the strange arachnids and the disappearance of four young women from the area around the lake? Obviously, these small insectlike creatures couldn't have spirited them away. And why had all four suffered from delirium and weird dreams, just before they vanished?

IT WAS A warm and mild August night, with just the merest hint of rain in the distance—the kind of night on which there are few pleasures greater than a fine meal followed by a gramophone concert in the music room. And the meal was indeed fine; Mary Quinlan, our estimable factotum, had quite outdone herself with a magnificent roast capon, and the mouth of my friend and companion Dario di Cesare was literally watering as he deftly drew the cork from a bottle of chilled Chablis.

"Bene," the little Italian muttered. "The obstinate obstruction gives way at last, and we are free to enjoy our wine!" He filled my glass lavishly.

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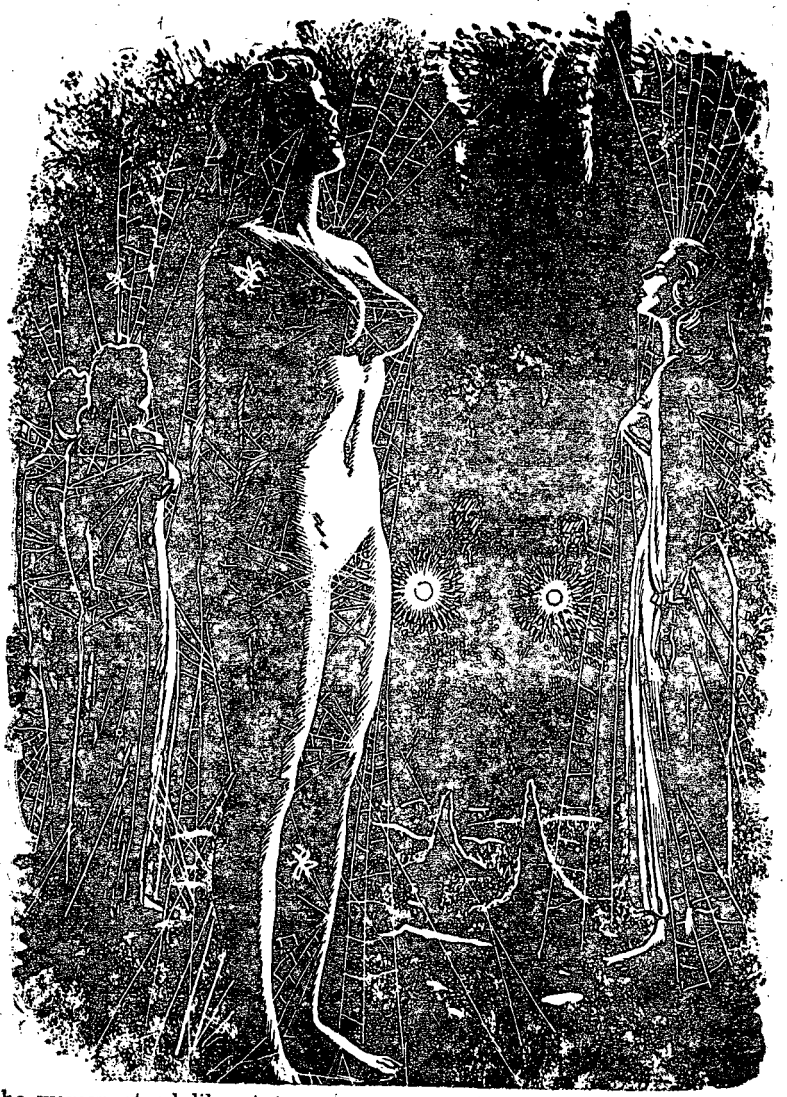

The women stood like statues, covered with the webs of the spiderlike creatures.

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"Drink hearty, friend Starbuck, and proceed to attack your fowl with gusto—for the great talents of *la* Callas await us in the music room."

Di Cesare had brought home but that afternoon a new album of operatic discs, and I knew that only the opulence of the meal Miss Quinlan had prepared had kept him from plunging at once toward our music room to surround himself with the wonderful melodies of Donizetti. For the peppery little psychoanalyst had brought with him from his native land—when forced by tyranny to leave twenty years before—the Italian's fanatical devotion to opera.

"Looks as though there'll be rain tonight," I ventured.

"*Si.* Clouds shroud the stars," di Cesare remarked between mouthfuls of tender white meat. "There will be no glorious meteoric displays tonight, I fear. But for us there will be a display more dazzling than even the Leonid showers, via the spinning discs."

FOR THE past two weeks, we had been subjected to nightly meteor showers of great intensity—a normal occurrence in August, though this year they seemed particularly intense—and di Cesare and I had witnessed in wonder the fall of one blazing beauty several weeks before. Tonight, though, the little Italian's mind was riveted exclusively on his new operatic album, and not even the unheralded appearance of the Star of Bethlehem would budge him from the music room this evening.

"Excuse me, sirs," Mary Quinlan said, entering the dining room with an air of irritation. "There's a young man outside who insists on seeing you, Dr. di Cesare. I told him you're eating, but he won't go away, and he says he'll stay outside all night making a racket until I let him in to talk to you, so..."

Di Cesare cut off the voluble flow with a gesture of one hand. "*Ahime,*" he sighed sadly, "will interruptions never cease? Send him in, Miss Quinlan."

"But your dinner..."

"Send him in. Perhaps he will be brief, and we can return in peace to this excellent bird."

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THE YOUNG man who entered was hatless and wild-looking. Moist patches of sweat showed through his thin sports shirt. He glanced at our laden table and said apologetically, "I hate to come barging in like this when you're in the middle of dinner, Dr. di Cesare."

"The damage is done," my friend said, his eyes sparkling with annoyance. "Now that you are here, tell us, *per favore*, why it is you must disturb us at this hour."

"It's my wife," he said. "She's disappeared—gone without a trace!"

"A case for the police, not us," I snapped. "Dr. di Cesare isn't in the business of crime detection."

"Wait," the young man exclaimed. "You see, she—she has been delirious for several days. Muttering about a cave, and insects talking to her, and all kinds of other gibberish. She didn't have any fever or anything, but her eyes were closed, and she didn't seem to hear anything we said to her. I had the doctor—maybe you know him, Dr. Starbuck, he's Dr. Wright from Lorimer Street—but he couldn't figure out what the matter was, and suggested that it was a mental breakdown, and that I call in a psychiatrist. And then some time this afternoon she disappeared! I had engaged a nurse for her, you see, and the nurse was going to bathe her, and had gone to draw the water; and when she came back the bed was empty and my wife was gone!"

I SAID, "This is all very interesting, Mr.—Mr. . ."

"Collins. Paul Collins."

"Mr. Collins. But you've made a mistake by coming here. Phillipsburg has a very efficient police force to deal with disappearances. And in any event, my friend Dr. di Cesare is not a psychiatrist. He is a psychoanalyst; that is to say, he practices Freudian therapy to cure neuroses, and. . ."

"Basta!" di Cesare exclaimed. "If there is any explaining to do, friend Starbuck, let me do it." He looked sharply up at the young man. "Your wife, Mr. Collins, has vanished after a sudden schizophrenic seizure. Have you notified the police of her disappearance?"

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"Yes, I called them right away. And it was Sergeant Berkowitz who suggested that I tell you about it, too. He said there was something definitely fishy about it, and that you'd be interested in the case."

Di Cesare scowled fiercely. "*Sciagurato!* Seeing me leave the record store with a neatly-wrapped album under my arm this afternoon, the brutish Berkowitz must have spent all day devising some means of prying me loose from my phonograph this evening!"

"You'll help me, then?" Collins said hopefully.

Di Cesare shrugged. "I will finish my meal. Then I will telephone *il* Berkowitz and learn why this matter should interest me. And then, *forse*, I will be at your service, *Signor* Collins."

DI CESARE rushed through his meal, stuffing the meat into his mouth and gulping the wine as though he were eating nothing more important than hamburger, or drinking no finer beverage than soda pop. While we finished, poor Collins was banished to di Cesare's waiting-room, there to cool his heels and, if he chose, explore di Cesare's bound volumes of *Imago*. At length, the meal was concluded. What had promised to be a relaxed evening for two bachelor operaphiles was rapidly turning into yet another frantic exertion in the interests of law and order.

Taking his coffee in three swallows, di Cesare rose from the table, ignoring the cognac Miss Quinlan had thoughtfully placed out for after-dinner delectation. "I will phone the police, *amico mio*, and get to the root of this. You had best go to my waiting-room and comfort the Collins lad."

I found Collins pacing nervously up and down the room. He turned on me the moment I entered.

"Dr. Starbuck, do you think di Cesare can find my wife? The police seemed to think he was the only one who could."

"If your wife can be found," I said, "di Cesare will go to the ends of the Earth to find her. I hope you realize, though, that he's sacrificing an evening's pleasure to help you."

"I can't tell you how grateful I am. And if only he can find Ellie for me..."

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AT THAT moment, di Cesare strode briskly into the room. His eyes were alight, and he was nervously tugging at his pointed little goatee.

"Well?" I asked.

"I have indeed spoken to Detective Sergeant Berkowitz, and he requests that we come to the station house at once, young Collins and I. You too, friend Starbuck, if you wish."

"Of course. But—what's it all about?"

"Mrs. Collins is not the first to disappear," di Cesare said. "She is the fourth, in the past two days. And the same symptoms in each case—delirium, dreams of caves and insects, ultimately somnambulism. An epidemic of schizophrenia! *Perbacco,* but it gives me the fascination!"

"But what about the Donizetti album?" I asked.

"Pleasures postponed are all the sweeter," di Cesare remarked. *"Andiamo, signori!* To the police station!"

A LIGHT rain was beginning to fall as we crammed ourselves into di Cesare's diminutive Fiat and headed for the police station. As usual, di Cesare drove as if the traffic regulations were for mere mortals, not himself. Only a few minutes later, we pulled up in front of the building that housed the Phillipsburg police.

The light was on in the second-floor office of Detective Sergeant Berkowitz. He rose to greet us as we entered, his jowly, usually-affable face looking dark and fretful.

"A terrible business, Dr. di Cesare. Four young women in their twenties going off their rockers like this."

"Have you found my wife yet, Sergeant?"

Berkowitz glared witheringly at Collins. "I've got a six-state alarm out for her," he said. "And every off-duty cop in town is on emergency call, hunting for her. That's the best I can tell you now."

"Do you suspect kidnapping?" I asked.

Berkowitz shrugged. "I wish I knew what I suspected. Look—in each case, the girl was out of her head for a couple of days before disappearing. Talked about a mysterious cave, bugs, whatnot. Same sort of gabble with each girl. And all four walked out of their

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houses in broad daylight while nobody was looking. Elinor Collins left in her birthday suit, according to the nurse. I tell you, it don't make sense. Four girls having the same nightmare, and all of them going into thin air..." He shrugged in the elaborate manner of his ancestors. "I don't know. That's why I sent for Dr. di Cesare. He seems to do just fine with cockeyed cases like this."

Di Cesare grinned. "Indeed, some mysteries are beyond even the efforts of the so-efficient police force. But I beg you, more details!"

Berkowitz handed him a sheaf of papers. "Here's the statements of the people concerned in the other three disappearances. That's about all I can give you right now."

DI CESARE took the papers and skimmed rapidly through them, muttering to himself in a steady stream of unintelligible Italian. When he put the last sheet down, he looked up and said, "*Amici miei,* there is something weird at work here."

"What have you discovered, di Cesare?"

"Nothing, as yet, sorrowfully. Except that this is a most strange case. Consider: identical hallucinations on the part of four young women who did not know each other at all. And identical disappearances under mysterious circumstances. It tests disbelief."

"But doesn't Freud say," I asked, "that many hallucinations well up from the common unconscious of mankind? And so it shouldn't be surprising that four girls would have the same kind of dream, according to his theory."

"True, *mio caro.* But the racial unconscious is not so efficient, *eh?* It does not simultaneously smite four young women of the same town with identical dreams, especially when the four have had no contacts. I fear that what we have to contend with is something that the good Viennese sage never dreamed of, *signori.*"

"For the love of God, what's he talking about?" Collins demanded. "Where did my wife go? What's all this babble about Freud?"

Di Cesare chuckled. "I am

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merely saying, my friend, that I am in doubt. But perhaps there will be an end to our doubts shortly. Your telephone, Sergeant?"

"Sure."

"Whom are you calling?" I asked.

"Norman Burke," di Cesare said. "The president of the local speleological society. I wish him to mobilize his forces on our behalf."

NINETY minutes later, a motley group of some twenty men and women had assembled at police headquarters. They wore leather jackets and sturdy trousers, despite the warm mugginess of the evening, and they were equipped with ropes, pickaxes, powerful searchlights, "walky-talky" radio communicators, and all manner of other paraphernalia. They were the Phillipsburg Speleological Society, and they had come from their homes at the urgent request of their president, Norman Burke.

Burke himself, a stocky, red-faced man in his middle fifties, was a local veterinarian whose hobby was "spelunking," or cave-exploring. I knew him vaguely, since, after all, we were both members of the healing profession, albeit of distant branches.

HE SAID now, "I want to thank you all for responding to this emergency call. I'm not in much of a position myself to explain why you're here, except to say that Dr. di Cesare needs you to help him with an important case. He'll tell you the rest himself."

Di Cesare stepped forward, his eyes flashing eagerly. "I apologize for the suddenness with which I had you yanked from your homes this evening," he said. "But the fates of four young women may depend on your skills."

"Really," Berkowitz exclaimed, "just because those women dreamed about caves doesn't mean they're actually *in* a cave, Dr. di Cesare..."

"Let me do this my way, *per piacere*," di Cesare told the Sergeant, silencing him with an imperious wave of his hand. "Your men are searching the area in the orthodox way. We shall supplement them. And has not Freud said many times that the most obvious methods

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should never be discarded merely on the grounds of their obviousness?"

Berkowitz subsided. Di Cesare faced the eager, curious speleologists once again and said, "During the last two days, four young women have vanished mysteriously from their homes—one of them the wife of the unfortunate Mr. Collins, whom you see here. In all four cases the disappearance was preceded by strange hallucinations, dreams of caves and insects. I suspect that perhaps a search of the caves in this vicinity would not be ill-advised. Sergeant Berkowitz, you have a city map?"

BERKOWITZ produced a map of Phillipsburg and environs from a shelf in his office closet. Di Cesare spread it out on the detective's desk and said, "Dr. Burke, will you be good enough to mark the location of the major caves in this area?"

"Of course."

Taking a red pencil from Berkowitz' desk, the speleologist rapidly sketched in X-marks in eight or ten areas, chiefly in the wooded, hilly section that surrounded broad Lake Thomas.

"Bene," di Cesare muttered. "And now, Sergeant, kindly indicate the locations of the homes from which the four missing women came."

Consulting his notes, Berkowitz laboriously colored in four marks. I peered over di Cesare's shoulder and saw that the homes were in four different areas of the city—but they were situated in a rough semicircle that ran along the borders of the lake! All four women, then, had come from houses near the lakefront and near the cave region! Obviously di Cesare had something in mind which he was keeping from the rest of us. But I knew him well enough, after all these years, to refrain from trying to probe his hypothesis. In his own good time, if all went well, he would let us in on his secrets.

He looked up from the map. "A pattern takes place, *amici!* And now, *andiamo,* off to the caves!"

The spelunkers began to gather up their equipment and file out. Di Cesare smiled at me. "Perhaps you had best go

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home and get your rest, *mio vecchio*. The night is damp, and the dankness of caves will do your old bones no good."

"Curse you, di Cesare, my bones aren't a month older than yours!" I yelped.

There was a mischievous twinkle in the little Italian's eyes. "Very well, then. Let us go—and consider yourself warned."

THE RAIN had ceased, but an oppressive damp still clung tight to the town. Burke and his spelunkers were having a conference in the street, dividing up the various caves of the region among themselves. Finally they reached some understanding, went to their separate cars, and drove off. Di-Cesare, Collins, and I re-entered the tiny Fiat; Sergeant Berkowitz, having expressed skepticism about this entire enterprise, was on his way home for his belated evening's repose.

We drove off lakeward, with di Cesare keeping the Fiat humming along unnervingly close to Norman Burke's station-wagon. It was now past nine, and I thought longingly of what the evening might have been—two hours of glorious opera, followed by some delicate liqueur and a good night's sleep. Instead, we would be dragged by di Cesare's zeal through dank caves and dreary darkness until who knew what hour of the night.

MIST WAS rising from the lake. The frogs that inhabited the shore region ceased their songs abruptly as our cars arrived.

Lake Thomas was ringed with low limestone cliffs that were hollowed by years and centuries of erosion. The children of the town were fond of wandering in the caves, but some were extremely deep and were dangerous for any wanderer but an expert speleologist. Burke and two of his companions entered the nearest of the caves, while di Cesare, Collins, and I followed not far behind. Within the cave, all was cold and damp, bone-chilling. Our voices, when we spoke, echoed eerily. Up ahead of us prowled Burke and his associates, while we kept our eyes open for anything unusual.

After fifteen minutes of ex-

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ploring the twisting labyrinth within the cliff, I was moist and uncomfortable, and my bones did indeed ache from the dankness—though I would sooner have cut off my legs than admitted my discomfort to di Cesare.

The little Italian strode ahead buoyantly, wandering into every bypath and crevice he came to, until I greatly feared that at some turn he would slip from sight and be forever lost. He maintained his footing, though, with the agility of a mountain goat.

FROM TIME to time the walkie-talkie carried by Burke would burst into chattering sound—reports from his colleagues in different caves. Invariably, they were reports of no consequence. I was wearying rapidly. At my side, Collins murmured, "Does Dr. di Cesare really think that caves have anything to do with this? It was only delirious raving, after all."

I shrugged. "It's altogether possible that di Cesare is on a false trail. But it's best not to question him, I've found."

After nearly an hour, we had penetrated as far into the cave as any of the spelunkers had gone before, and no clue had been found. We seemed hopelessly immured beneath the surface of the cliff. I was exhausted; and even di Cesare, turning to me, muttered, *"Ahime,* friend Starbuck, I fear perhaps we have chased the wild goose."

"Tell me, di Cesare, do you think we ought to..."

"Hold it!" Burke said sharply. "There's a message coming through. What? You've found them? All right, we'll be there as soon as we can get out of here!"

"What is it?" I cried.

"Dan and Corinne Haley have found the missing women. They're in Cave Seven, all the way around on the other side of the lake."

"The side near my house!" Collins exclaimed. "Did they find my wife?"

"They found all four," Burke said.

"Meraviglioso!" di Cesare exclaimed. "Wonderful! Let us make haste!"

MAKING haste was not all that easy, however. We

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were no longer fresh-winded, and we had come a considerable distance. Even at top speed, without pausing for any side explorations, it took us nearly half an hour to retrace our steps and reach the open air once again.

We hastened around the lake to the cliffs on the eastward bank, and saw as we did so that the other cave-explorers were similarly congregating. Young Collins was tremendously excited. "See, there's my house right back through there—we're only a couple of blocks from this side of the lake. It wouldn't have been hard for Ellie to walk this distance."

We plunged into the cave, but we did not have far to go. No more than a hundred yards back from the face of the cliff, we came across a widened chamber hewn by erosion into the side of the cave proper. Two of the spelunkers, a middle-aged couple named Haley, stood by the entrance to the little natural chapel. As we approached, they flashed their beam in.

I GASPED. The four young women were standing as if petrified against the bare rock. They were shrouded with fine cobwebs, and small dark insects scuttled frantically for shelter as the light struck them.

"They're all breathing," Dan Haley said. "We haven't touched them at all, though. We called to them, but they wouldn't wake up."

"Ellie!" Collins cried. He started to lunge into the chamber, but di Cesare shot out a thin, wiry arm and restrained the young man with ease.

"Be not impulsive, *signore,"* the little Italian warned. "Your embrace might prove fatal to your wife."

He bowed to Burke and the other speleologists. *"Mille grazie,"* he said courteously. "A thousand thanks for your assistance tonight. I have but two favors more to ask."

"Of course," Burke said.

"The first is that you and your friends depart at once. What remains to be done can best be done with only a few onlookers. My second request is that you notify the good Sergeant Berkowitz that the missing women have indeed been found, but that Dario di Cesare requests a short time alone

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with them before they are removed from the cave."

BURKE NODDED, and his group of spelunkers began to disperse. "I'll leave you these flashlights," he said. "You won't have any trouble finding your way back out of here."

They departed, discussing the strange case in whispers that echoed back to us. We stood together at the entrance to the little chapel—di Cesare, Collins, and I.

"My wife's in there," Collins cried. "And spider webs all over her! Let me go to her!"

"Va via!" di Cesare cried. "Away from here! Your wife will recover, if you obey me."

"V-very well."

"Take this searchbeam and step back. Hold the light so it illuminates us. Ah. *Bene!* Come, now, friend Starbuck. Let us examine these women."

WITH COLLINS providing light, di Cesare and I stepped into the chamber. The four women did not awaken. They were all in their twenties, and only one of them was clad in anything substantial. Two wore nightgowns, and one—it was Collins' wife—had been drawn from her house totally nude.

Kneeling, di Cesare placed his hand gently on the girl's slim, pale bosom. "She breathes. She is in very deep sleep. Fetch your bag from the car, friend Starbuck. Adrenalin will bring these girls to wakefulness."

I made my way out of the cave, found my black bag, and returned. Collins still held a head. "He's talking to the spiders, Dr. Starbuck! I think he's out of his head."

I peered in. Di Cesare indeed presented a strange sight. He had scooped up one of the many insects that crawled over the floor of the chamber, and his lips were moving in a subliminal murmur as the insect clung to his cheek!

"Di Cesare!" I cried out. "That insect may be dangerous!"

He blinked, opening his eyes like one awakened from deep sleep. "You called, Starbuck?"

"I said that insect might be dangerous. Brush it off your face!"

HE LAUGHED. "The insect means no harm. And do

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you not notice anything strange about this insect, *amico mio?*"

"Strange? It's just a nasty little brute of a spider, that's all."

"Ah, this is no arachnid, *caro*. Nor is it any insect spawned on this Earth, I'll wager. Come: let us awaken these girls and attempt to talk with them, before the arrival of the ambulances."

I prepared the injection of the stimulant, and di Cesare, who, of course, had a medical degree, administered it. In a few minutes, color returned to the faces of the four women. They stirred; they moaned; they opened their eyes and sat up. Suddenly conscious of her nudity, Elinor Collins shrieked.

"Have no fear," di Cesare murmured. "Old Starbuck and I are beyond the years of lustfulness, and we are medical men besides. Your husband waits just without."

Within a few seconds, we had four conscious and near-hysterical women on our hands. Di Cesare spoke to them each in turn, soothing them, using his unique powers of comfort and solace, until they were calm. He threw his cloak over Elinor Collins, and we helped the four women to their feet and out of the dank cave.

NOT ONE of the four could explain the strange compulsion that had caused her to go to the cave. They spoke of delirium, nightmares, a *beckoning*. Each remembered having seen one of the strange insects just before the onset of her mysterious hallucinations.

Ambulances were waiting outside the cave. The good Berkowitz had arrived as well, as had relatives of the other three missing women. There was a tearful scene of reunion, and then the four were bundled off for a night of rest in Phillipsburg General Hospital.

Berkowitz shook his head puzzledly. "All right, Dr. di Cesare. What's the explanation this time? What possesses four girls to go creeping off into a cave?"

"I am not yet certain," di Cesare replied. "Be good enough to leave us, *Signor* Berkowitz. Quite possibly I will have an explanation for you in the morning—although I think it quite probable, it is

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an explanation you will not care for."

Still shrugging, Berkowitz returned to his car and drove away. Now only di Cesare and I remained at the entrance to the cave. It was past midnight now, but I felt not the slightest trace of sleep.

"*Vieni*, Starbuck *mio*. There is work yet for me, and you must help."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I have a patient, my friend, badly in need of my aid. A stranger patient than ever my practice has brought me before. I would not care to face him unwatched."

DI CESARE refused to carry his explanation any further. Turning, he led me back through the passageway to the room where the missing girls had been.

To my amazement, he lowered himself to the clammy floor and sprawled out on his back. Almost instantly, half a dozen of the spider-like insects scuttled toward him and began to envelop him in webbing.

"Di Cesare! Those obnoxious insects..."

"I know," he smiled. "*Pace*, good friend. Remain here and watch. I will enter a deep sleep, as did those girls. Watch over me, but do not attempt to wake me." He took his brandy flask from his pocket. "When I stir, pour a few drops of this precious fluid between my lips. If necessary, administer a stronger stimulant. I will be expending perhaps nearly the last molecule of my strength, and I will need you when I awaken."

I was utterly mystified. But I was conditioned to obey di Cesare in all things, no matter how preposterous they might seem on the surface. Stepping back, I forced myself to look idly on as di Cesare composed himself as if for sleep, while the energetic insects spun their web about his face and body. His eyes closed. Within moments, his breath was rising and falling with the even, regular rhythm characteristic of the hypnoid state.

HIS LIPS began to move after a moment. I was astonished, upon detecting a few stray words, to learn that he was speaking as if addressing a new patient in the early

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stages of analysis! Had he gone mad? Surely it was madness to lie on clammy stone deep within a cave, mouthing the phrases of Freudian analysis while strange spiders spun webs over him!

Time ticked slowly past. Di Cesare spoke less and less, as though we were now listening to a patient's flow of consciousness. I found my eyes nodding; an hour went by, two hours. It was getting into the small hours of the morning. I fought with myself to stay awake. Di Cesare looked pale and somehow shrunken now; his lean face was beaded with sweat, his usually neat beard looked straggly and unkempt. I could almost sense strength being drained rapidly from him. What insanity was this?

Now it was three o'clock in the morning . . . half past . . . I nodded . . . I slipped into a light doze . . .

I heard di Cesare's hoarse cry. "Starbuck! The brandy, Starbuck!"

WAKING with a start, I saw di Cesare looking beady-eyed and white-faced. He was clawing away the spiders' webs and was trying to sit up. I rushed to him, unscrewed the cap of the flask, put the flange to his lips. He took a deep pull of brandy, gasped, smiled.

"*Sant' angeli,* I know now how a man of ninety years feels. Help me to my feet, Starbuck. We must go outside, and we shall behold a sight never seen before by mortal man!"

He lurched to his feet and nearly toppled floorward again. I caught him. Together we tottered to the passageway and thence to the open air. To my surprise, I saw a steady stream of insects preceding us outward —rushing scurryingly past us and heading for the water!

Di Cesare was absolutely drained of strength. Normally he was a powerful man, for all his lack of bulk, but now he could barely swing one leg after the other. We reached the outside and he sank limply down on a boulder at the mouth of the cave.

"Look," he cried. "Your spiders, friend Starbuck—rushing toward the lake."

I watched in bewilderment as the creatures swept into the dark water and were gone.

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"Di Cesare, what is this all about?"

He smiled wanly. "I have just performed an analysis—a year's work in three hours. *Per carita,* it was a strain! But it is done now. The lake, Starbuck—*osservate,* the lake!"

THE LAKE was beginning to roil and bubble, as though something monstrous were rising from its depths. Before my startled eyes, the surface broke, and a metal shape emerged, rose higher. A submarine? No—something else, something stranger, with a tail of fire. It rose higher and higher, until I could feel the fiery blast overhead, and suddenly it was gone, with an enormous roar, dwindling into the gray sky of early dawn.

"Great Scott, di Cesare, what on Earth was *that?*"

He laughed. "It is no longer on Earth, friend Starbuck. Nor did it belong here. We have had a rare privilege, seeing the departure of a strange visitor."

"From some other world?"

"Si. A traveller in distress. Several weeks ago, when we saw the particularly bright meteor flash across the sky—it was a spacegoing vessel, coming to rest at the bottom of our lake. A small vessel, admittedly, no larger than my Fiat. But containing a creature of formidable mind—formidable, but sick.

"PICTURE the situation, Starbuck. A solitary space traveler, his only companions the insect-creatures that serve as his sensory extensions, struck by crippling psychosis in mid-travel. An irrational fear, magnified, exalted into total terror. A forced landing. The sending out of the insects, which are mere transmitters for the thought-waves of the sick creature from the stars. The random capture of four young housewives—bringing them together to the cave, in hopes that they could heal the sick mind. Alas, they are incapable! On the stranger's world, things are different. *Bene.* We come. We find the women. I pick up an insect; I receive the impulses. I learn the truth of the situation. I lie down here, place myself *en rapport* with the creature, take upon myself the burdens of the alien ego."

"Impossible!" I ejaculated.

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"Why you didn't even know its language and thought-patterns..."

"So? And likewise the 'insects' are the impossible extensions of this impossible intelligence." He shrugged. "Had you asked me yesterday were it possible, I think I would have said no. But—I have to try; and this I find—that the flow of thoughts makes possible in a few hours what would take years were mere words employed. Perhaps this being's case was a relatively simple one, you think?— I do not know.... But, as you did see, freed of the psychosis, the creature is able to continue his journey."

"Madness, di Cesare!"

"Perhaps. Come, old friend. Let us salvage what we can of the night's sleep. I have the weakness of a kitten. And tomorrow you must help me construct a tale to tell the skeptics."

He shuddered. "This is one case history I can submit to my colleagues never, I fear. Ah, but how the good Freud would have relished an account of Oedipal fixation in a beast from the distant stars! Another sip of the brandy, friend Starbuck. And perhaps it is best that you operate the car. Di-Cesare has given aid to a mind far more powerful than his own, *caro,* and it will be many hours before he is himself again."

On Departments

We haven't dropped the letter column and the "Reckoning": space was tight, this issue, and I didn't want to hold over the book reviews.

Some readers thought the September editorial indicated that I was sore at the fans. Bless you all — I'm not! The situation is that I can't run fan-slanted departments any more unless I can justify them — show proof that they're really wanted. So it's up to you who want me to run them to supply me with the ammunition I need to get them back. Mainly — letters of comment on SFS as a whole, including your requests. If you do YOUR part, you'll then get an assist from RAWL.

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Missile, Missile Who's Got The Missile?

Quiz Feature by Joseph Stacey

(Answers are on page 69)

LISTED below are the names of 12 major United States missiles and rockets. Do you know which of our "services" (ARMY, NAVY, or AIR FORCE) possess them? Nine correct answers is passing; 10-11 is good; 12 excellent.

—— 1. NIKE AJAX
—— 2. SIDEWINDER
—— 3. THOR
—— 4. TERRIER
—— 5. BOMARC
—— 6. JUPITER
—— 7. SPARROW III
—— 8. TALOS
—— 9. NIKE HERCULES
—— 10. FALCON
—— 11. VANGUARD
—— 12. CORPORAL

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the hunted ones

Novelet by Mack Reynolds

In their arrogant pride, Earthmen had never discovered the vital facts about the Denebians . . .

THE DENEBIAN said, "Surely you are jesting."

"No."

"If I understand you correctly, your people . . ."

"Selected sportsmen," the pilot amended.

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"...are to hunt me in much the same manner as they once did wild beasts." The alien's hands were cuffed securely to the sides of his bucket seat; they were strangely humanoid. His hands and his voice were humanoid.

"That's about it," the pilot said. "We'll land in about ten minutes. You'll be freed..."

"F r e e d!" the Denebian snorted bitterly.

"...and your survival will from then on depend upon yourself."

"More data, please." The alien prisoner realized now that all this was actuality, and that every word the Earthling spoke might be of intense value to him in the immediate future.

The pilot shrugged. "That's about it. You have a wide range—that adds to the sport—the hunters come in after you on foot, equipped w i t h firearms."

"Firearms?"

"Rather primitive weapons. Metal pellets—we call them bullets—are fired by chemical explosion."

"Then they must strike me with an individual pellet to end my life?"

The pilot said dryly, "Some men become quite expert at this. Believe me."

"How wide an area do I have in which to elude them?"

"This is the Florida range. You have almost 60,000 square miles, counting water surface. Large areas of it are in swamp, particularly toward the south where you Dennies do particularly well." The pilot shifted in his seat. "Quite a mark of distinction to have a Denny head taken in the Everglades on your wall."

"On your wall!"

The pilot was silent.

The alien said softly, "So after hunting us down, your, ah, *sportsmen* hang our heads on the walls of their homes and in that manner attain prestige. Has your race reached no further civilization?"

The pilot said, almost as though he was reciting, "Earth is the only truly civilized planet in the galaxy; the human race the only race capable of attaining true civilization."

EVEN THE Denebian's chuckle was humanoid in

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tone. But he had no time for whatever satisfaction he might have gained from stating his own position in debate. He continued his prodding, instead. "Then other Denebians have been turned loose in this manner?"

"Ummm. Thousands in Florida alone. But a Denny doesn't usually last very long. I heard one of the sports announcers, just yesterday, mention a party getting four Dennies at a crack. They'd taken up in the ruins of one of the old tourist towns."

The alien flexed his hands in their cuffs, trying to improve circulation. Some of this information he was already aware of, but he didn't want the pilot to know that. He asked, "How many ranges are there?"

"Three in North America. Florida, Rocky Mountains, Yucatan."

"And I understand you've allowed these areas to go back to nature. There is no population other than the hunters."

"That's right," the pilot said.

"And are there any of my fellows currently still at large?"

The pilot shrugged, checking the land contours below him. "There sure oughta be. Sometimes a Denny will hole up in the swamps and it'll take months to get him out. Need dogs and everything."

The Denebian assimilated this. His mind was racing. It was continually astonishing to discover how little the Earthlings had discovered of the nature of his race in the decades in which they had been in contact. There was a certain *arrogance* about it. It was as though these brash newcomers to interplanetary space had no interest in delving into the natural workings of the other intelligent beings, with whom they had come in contact—neither in their physical workings nor in their culture.

The guard had just revealed an example of this. Dogs were sometimes used to help root fleeing Denebians from the swamps. Earthlings had obviously never learned that Denebians were odorless, while the dog, if he understood this life form correctly, based his trailing abilities upon smell.

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HE MUST not waste time in philosophizing now; every word from the pilot might be of future use. "How do you justify this, *sport*, I believe you call it?"

"I don't," the pilot said. "I'm against it."

The Denebian looked at him.

There was an edge of irritation in the other's voice. "I'm under orders. There's a war on between the Solar System and Deneb and her colonies. I do what I'm told."

The alien said, "Your race-conscience must be under terrible strain."

The pilot said, checking the landscape below him again. "You forget that we have none; we have individual consciences. That's one of the reasons you Dennies aren't, and can't be, as good as we are. You haven't souls. You're like ants. Worse than animals. Each human works out his own destiny, answers to his own conscience. We're individuals!"

"I remember now," the Denebian said softly. "In fact, I recall reading of a period some generations ago back in your history. A small group of adventurers under one who would appear to have been a madman, was able to seize control of a great nation. They destroyed large areas of your planet and its population. The entire nation participated, each individual protesting afterwards that he was acting under orders. Soldiers, politicians, industrialists, scientists, doctors. . ."

The pilot was scowling at him.

"I believe the madman's name was Hitler," the Denebian finished.

"Oh," the pilot said. "Yeah, I read about him when I was a kid."

The Denebian had no time to pursue this. He said, "But even though you personally oppose this method of disposing of war prisoners, how do your people as a whole—or the government—justify the method?"

The pilot was searching below again for his landmarks. Damn it anyway. The officials of the sportsmen's associations carried this "return to the jungle" policy of theirs too far. No navigational aids. Practically nothing in the way of roads, even. He was following

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the St. Johns river up-current from the area formerly known as Jacksonville. He had definite orders where to set the helicopter down and to release the prisoner.

THE PRISONER! A gabby Denny if he ever saw one. And he'd seen more than one. Somehow this one was different. He wondered if Intelligence had got anything out of him. Probably not. A Denny never cracked. You could kill them in the pressure chambers, but even there they'd never crack. He brought himself back to the question the other had asked.

"What else can we do with you?" he said. The Denebian waited for him to continue, so he said further, "We can't turn you loose, obviously, or later on you'd be back fighting us."

"You might hold your prisoners until the conflict is over," the alien said mildly.

The pilot shook his head. "It'll never be over until your inferior race is gone." He considered for a long moment. "I heard a lecture about it once. It goes way back, to primitive times. To do a lot of simplifying, early man ate his prisoners of war. Cannibalism."

There was shock in the Denebian's voice. "His own kind?"

"That's right. Food was usually short, and it was good meat going to waste otherwise. Later on, as we developed, we stopped eating our prisoners and started sacrificing them to the Gods. The Aztecs were lulus at this; as many as 20,000 a day. Still later we developed the institution of slavery and it became as immoral to sacrifice men as it was to eat them; we started putting them to work. Then, after our economies had evolved farther, slavery wasn't efficient any more. We needed trained skilled workers to keep our industries going. So then, when we took another country's men prisoner, we kept them carefully in big concentration camps, and they kept ours. Then, when the war was over, they could go to work again."

The pilot had spotted the tiny landing field below, and they began to descend. He wound up his explanation with "Now we're back where we started. When we take Denebi-

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an prisoners of war we can't eat them, and our religion no longer calls for human sacrifice. We can't use you as slaves because we no longer need common labor, and can't trust you in our complicated factories. There's just one use to which you can be put. Our people have been getting away from the basic bloodlust that a good soldier needs. The desire, the *love* to kill. By using you prisoners as game—the most dangerous game possible—and hunting you in the mountains and the woods as our ancestors hunted, we revive this instinct. At least that's what the theory is. Like I said, I don't especially approve of it."

THEY WERE on the ground now. A small clearing in a wide expanse of palmettos and pine trees. "What now?" the Denebian asked quietly.

The pilot took a handweapon from a holster and trained it upon the other. "Over in that direction is the St. Johns river. It flows south to north for a couple of hundred miles or so through the peninsula of Florida. From what I understand, you Dennies can eat the heart of palm trees. That's a palm tree over there. You can also get nourishment out of fish, once you get over the funny repulsion you have against eating flesh of animals. And you can probably eat some of the other things; there's a lot of citrus fruit still growing around. You'll make out all right that way. Down south there's more swamps than around here. Most Dennies seem to make a beeline that way. However, our hunters know that and figure on it."

"What direction are the Rocky Mountains?" the Denebian asked. "And Yucatan?"

The pilot grinned and shook his head. "You couldn't make it. The Rockies are about 1,500 miles or more over to the west, through inhabited country. Yucatan is directly south, five hundred miles, maybe, over the Gulf of Mexico."

"Where are the hunters?"

"Everywhere. Five minutes after I'm gone, you might get it. In fact, your first twenty-four hours are your worst ones. Most hunters get their Denny the first day. From then on you slicken up and probably last a week or more."

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"How many hunters are there?"

"Thousands. Tens of thousands. It's the most popular sport in the world. Like I said, the military government sponsors it."

The alien asked just one more question. "Why have you told me all this? You've improved my chances of survival. Was it personal kindness?"

The pilot's face was sour. "Orders, Denny. The longer you survive, the better the sport; that's the idea. Once in awhile a sportsman is killed, and that's what the government wants. That's what brings out the real kill urge, the actual physical danger of the quarry being able to turn on you."

He trained the gun on the other and flicked a switch. The alien freed his human-like hands and flexed them carefully, still remaining in his seat.

"All right, out," the pilot said. "I suggest you head for the river. Easier to get something to eat there."

The Denebian turned half way in the bucket seat, looked into the other's eyes. "Thank you," he said. "You have been comparatively decent."

The Earthling was slightly embarrassed under the circumstances. He made a motion toward the palmetto fields with the barrel of the gun. "All right, get going."

The split second the mouth of the weapon was diverted from his body, the hand of the alien blurred in movement. The flat of the hand contacted the other's wrist joint. The gun spun away, rattling off somewhere in the interior of the aircraft.

II

THE DENEBIAN sprang from the helicopter, reached back inside, grasped the Earthling pilot by the collar of his flying suit with both hands and yanked. As the other came toward him, he turned his wide back, continued his pressure, hurled the other over his right shoulder and to the hard-packed ground. The pilot's breath escaped with a *whooosh*.

When he revived, the alien was perhaps ten feet away, crouched low, the gun in one hand, his attention obviously devoted largely to the sur-

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rounding palmettos. The reason was manifest. The sportsmen tried to get their Denny as soon as possible after it was landed. Possibly some of them were hurrying in this direction even now. The pilot cursed himself under his breath. What a fool he'd been, being sucked in like that! The only thing to do now...

The Denebian saw that the man was again conscious. "Sorry I had to do that," he said. "The reasons are obvious. However, you have nothing to worry about. Tell me, how does this weapon operate? How many times may it be used?"

The pilot's eyes narrowed and he began to raise himself to hands and knees.

The Denebian shook his head. "No, Don't do it. You have just sampled my speed and strength. The difference between myself and other, ah, Dennies, you have met is that I am a trained specialist in personal conflict. I could destroy you in a matter of moments with my hands. Don't be foolish."

The pilot realized this was true. "Nevertheless, I won't tell you a damn thing, Denny," he growled.

"Why not? Be reasonable. You just admitted a moment ago that your authorities desire that the game be difficult to bring down. My having this weapon admittedly makes me more dangerous. I assure you, I will be the most dangerous—ah—Denny, your people have ever hunted."

"Go to hell, buster."

The Denebian's face features were not suited to the Earthling smile but he could put tone in his voice. He said, "As things stand, your immediate superiors need not know of your foolishness. I won't harm you. You can return as though nothing has happened. But if you don't answer my questions, I am going to do such things to your craft that you will be stranded here. And then..."

"How do I know you'll let me go?"

"Why not?"

THE PILOT came to a quick decision. In fact, now that he considered it, he felt an inner satisfaction at the idea. Just wait until some of these smart-alec hunters ran into a

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Denny with a pistol! It'd take a week of Sundays to run *this* one down.

He explained the workings of the gun. Even donated the additional cartridges he had at his belt.

The Denebian directed the weapon at him and said, "And now I believe you have a pocket knife?"

It was delivered.

"And a container which will hold water?"

When the pilot turned his back to secure the thermos bottle, the Denebian moved quickly forward, thrust expertly at the back of the other's neck with the butt of the knife. The pilot collapsed forward.

The alien glanced quickly around at the palmetto fields again and shook his head. Spending this much time was dangerous but he had to do it. He had no way of knowing how upset the Earthlings might become if they learned that a Denebian was loose with a firearm.

He pushed the Earthling back into the interior of the helicopter, then studied the controls for a moment, recalling how the pilot had utilized them. He took the cigaret lighter he had found in his victim's pockets and ignited the other's clothing.

He then threw switches, pulled levers, and jumped back to allow the craft to throw itself forward and into the air.

He hurried into the underbrush, grimacing to find the palmetto leaves sharp.

The Denebian stood there a long moment watching after the aircraft. It broke into flames in a few minutes and dashed to the ground a mile or two from where he stood. He made a motion, Denebian in origin and denoting satisfaction, and then disappeared into the fields in the direction of the St. Johns river and the hunter's camp he had spotted while descending in the aircraft.

THE PILOT had not been the only one to observe the ground as they had flown along. This camp was the only one within quite a few miles.

The alien hadn't traveled more than three or four hundred yards before he heard a crashing through the palmettos. He couldn't have timed himself closer, he realized. The killers

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were out and after him.

He sank to the ground and remained motionless until the sounds of their passing were faint. He scurried on in the direction from which they had come.

Their base consisted of several tents of varying size, and two vehicles. He paused long enough to satisfy himself that no one had been left at the camp, and then hurried through it, making as thorough an inspection as he could in a few minutes. He took some items of food which past experience had taught him were of use to the Denebian metabolism, but which would hardly be missed by the group of sportsmen. He noted that there were cots for eight men. And there was a TV-phone arrangement in the large trailer vehicle; he'd have to keep that in mind.

He decided that they had but recently arrived, and that they were equipped for a lengthy stay. Had they been here longer, there would have been more debris; they weren't particularly neat about their camping.

He could afford to stay no longer. He scooted in the direction of the river to find concealment. It wasn't difficult, in the mishmash of driftwood, leaves and hyacinths which had piled about the knees of a cypress which stood half-in, half-out of the dark tannic stained water. A few moments spent in camouflage, using Spanish moss as a principle element, and he felt himself secure enough to relax and to consume the food. Only extreme misfortune would lead to his discovery, he felt sure.

THE DENEBIAN could have spent more time investigating the camp; it was a full half hour before the hunters returned.

They were complaining among themselves, indignant that they had missed him. There seemed to be little real group-affection in this race, he observed. At least, so their growling and grumbling voices would indicate.

One heavy-set Earthling garbed in an unbelievably gaudy outfit, was the most vocal. "It's getting worse each year. Back in '26, they used to bring in a dozen or so at a time and everybody'd know where

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they were going to be landed. Sometimes you got your trophy in ten, fifteen minutes."

"More sportsman-like this way," one of the others said. "Where the hell's that sandwich I put down when we saw the 'copter coming in?"

Nobody answered.

The Denebian tried to get some idea of their weapons from the manner in which they were handled, finally deciding that they were basically the same as the one he had appropriated from the pilot. His was a hand weapon; theirs was obviously meant to be held to the shoulder. He had an uncomfortable feeling that the larger guns were more accurate, and that in the use of either a certain proficiency was necessary —proficiency learned only by considerable practice.

He drew what information he could from their actions, their preparations for dinner, their obvious unconcern about guarding their camp.

The lack of any type of sentry was occasion for disappointment. There was no fear of the quarry, evidently none at all—which would mean that his people seldom, if ever, attacked the hunters. They merely fled, and hid, until finally destroyed. Well, that was to be expected, he supposed, bitter pill that it was to swallow.

OVER THE campfire that evening, the Earthlings drank their strange beverages, based—so he understood—on alcohol and meant to depress the senses. They drank their beverages and discussed the hunt.

They seemed less boisterous now, in spite of the alcohol, as though the closing in of the semi-tropical Floridian night had a damping quality. He strained to hear.

Not until they had begun to drift off to their cots did he catch what he had hoped for. One said, yawning, "I don't know if that 'copter landed anything at all. Maybe it was just fire patrol, or something, investigating that smoke we saw up toward the north. Wonder what that could've been."

The heavy-set man in the gaudy attire snorted. "Some crazy hunters probably set fire to the grass. Pretty dry around here."

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The first one yawned again. "Anyway, I'm in favor of taking another crack at that one we spotted across the river yesterday. One that went into the swamps. In this weather we could probably trail it. Not enough water to hide its tracks."

By nature, the fat man didn't seem to be inclined to agree with anybody about anything if there was an alternative, but now he said, "Maybe you're right. We can talk about it in the morning. I'd sure as hell like to get me another Denny—balance it on the other side of the fireplace from the one I got."

Somebody else called out, "Sam, you're purely a hog. I ain't even got one head; you want two."

THE DENEBIAN gave them two full hours before crawling from his concealment. He considered raiding again for a greater supply of foodstuffs, then decided against it; he couldn't take the chance. He slipped into the dark waters of the St. Johns; momentarily, something tugged about his leg and he felt fear on this strange planet. It was a lily root. It was nothing.

He carefully pushed his way through the hyacinth beds which were everywhere, finally reaching clear water. It was a moonless night; he rejected the need of concealment of his head and swam boldly, though quietly, his captured weapon held in his mouth. The pilot had said chemical explosion. Perhaps water would destroy its effectiveness.

On the far side, he drew himself out on the bank and considered the situation. Somewhere on this side—toward the swamp, wherever that was—was a fellow Denebian. Was locating him possible?

He remembered something the pilot had said: Most Denebians headed south, hoping to reach the greater concealment possibilities there.

One direction was as good as another, so far as he was concerned. And even though he missed making contact with this fellow it was possible that there would be others further on. And the further south he got, the more chance of contacting Denebians. He started off, star-guided; he had a

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rudimentary knowledge of Earth geography from his readings.

The tree-lined banks of the St. Johns were brutal to travel through, and particularly at night; Denebian eyes are little more effective than human ones. And at least an Earthling has some knowledge of what to expect in his own wilderness.

There was one particularly unexpected development. The Denebian felt something slither under his foot. He felt teeth strike and had to reach down to detach a water moccasin from the flesh of his leg.

He stared at it for a long moment, realizing by the nature of its attack that it was probably poisonous—at least to the earth-born. It would remain to be seen if its venom was ultra-deadly, or meaningless, to a native of the Deneb planets. He tried to remember what he had read of the reptiles of Earth; he seemed to recall something about Floridian snakes.

III

IT WAS SOME hours later that the obvious solution to his problem of locating his fellows became clear to him.

There are some fantastic similarities in advanced life-forms wherever they are found. And in life-forms which use voice and ear for communication, there is often repeated that greatest art, where life touches nearest to Godhead. Music.

The Denebian lifted high his voice and sang—a high whistling, sighing, alien melody. Never, never had such sound been heard on Earth before. The vast differences between the music of the West and that of India or China are as nothing compared to the differences between the song of Deneb and that of Earth.

As he went, he sang.

It was a calculated risk, but he was of the opinion that Earthlings would not be abroad in the swamps through which he was now traveling—not at this hour. His progress was slow and labored and thus would theirs have been. They would prefer to remain in the comfort of their hunter camps.

He went through his repertoire, piece by piece, back to the music of his early youth, back to his days of training,

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back to the inspirational songs of his calling.

By coincidence, it was a Denebian equivalent of a love aria that he was keening when the answer came. He stopped both his song and his movement—stopped and listened. These jungle-swamps were ideal for illusion; he could be mistaken.

But the answering song was there. His face contorted in the Denebian expression of pleasure and amusement; there was a startled quality in the other's voice.

They made their way in each other's direction, stopping occasionally to sing a few notes in the way of mutual guiding. Finally they met under the reaching branches and drooping Spanish moss of a live oak.

They touched antennae and the Denebian said, through the contact, "Sister!"

SHE SAID, overwhelmed, even beyond the degree of this unexpected meeting with a fellow of her mother planet, "But, you're a *Salaone*."

"Yes, Sister." He sent what confidence he could to her through their contact.

"But...but..." beyond her immediate distress, the instincts of her race were at work. "But how could you be risked? How can we..."

He said, "Sit here, Sister. We should have several hours before dawn, and..."

"But the hunters! We must go on. Yesterday they nearly caught me!"

"I am here now," he let her know through their contact.

"Yes," she said, and relaxed.

He questioned her quickly, deftly. How had she been captured? What was her background? How long had she been eluding the Earthling hunters? Were there other Denebians in the vicinity?

She had been on a pioneer transport, an agriculturist specialist on her way to one of the colonies. The transport had been captured by a Solar System cruiser. They had been brought back to Terra where nearly half died under questioning in the pressure chambers. Later she, with a dozen others had been released in the Floridian hunting ranges. She understood that the rest of the passengers and crew had been

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sent west to the Rocky Mountain range.

And the dozen who had been released with her?

The first day, four had been killed; the rest had escaped into the swamps. They stayed together, and three more were gone by the end of the second day; then they had separated. That had been at least a month ago. She had lost count of time.

"A month ago! And you were an agriculturist!"

"Yes."

"And for a month you have eaten the plant life..."

"And even some of the lesser animal life, O Salaone. It has been very difficult."

"Of course, Sister. That is why I have been sent; this must all be ended. But through your background you have found the edible plants, the roots, the fruits, the berries which we can use as food?"

"Yes, but that was not too difficult. Their metabolism is in many ways similar to ours."

He said decisively, "Give me that information, Sister. All of the knowledge you have accumulated to the end of utilizing their planet and animal life for our sustenance."

SHE TIGHTENED their antennae clasp and they merged into mental unity.

Afterwards he congratulated her. "And now," he said, "I have been given specialized training." He sent her an edge of humor which he felt her morale would use profitably. "A considerable amount of it gleaned from Earthling publications of a century or so ago. Guerrilla warfare they called it. Let me give you this, Sister."

Their antennae tightened again and after a long moment she moaned, "How terrible."

"Yes," he said, "they are still a most primitive race basically, in spite of their astonishing technical advances of the last few decades."

"Salaone, I would rather have not been given this knowledge."

"Nor would I," he said bitterly.

He questioned her farther. She had no idea whether any of the others of her group had survived this long. Two weeks or so ago, she had seen one briefly—a former officer of the

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ship who had also seemed to have adapted well enough to survive. They had separated after an exchange of experiences, feeling safer that way.

"Why did you not twin?" he asked.

"But why..?" she answered, depths in her voice.

The Salaone said softly, and vocally this time, "We are changing our tactics as of tonight, Sister. Is your health adequate? Has this period undermined your constitution?"

Although he was speaking aloud, they had maintained physical contact and she knew what he meant. Her voice was very low, and there was a shy quality. "My health is excellent, Salaone. If anything, the exercise, the stimulation of my situation...I...my health is excellent, Salaone."

"Then with your permission, Sister."

"O yes, Salaone."

They met in intimate Denebian embrace.

And when morning discovered them, they had twinned in Denebian manner.

THE SALAONE instructed them briefly. "You both have the necessary information to maintain your existence here in the swamps, thanks to the background and experiences of my Sister, your twin-mother. You also have my training, especially adapted for this situation, to the extent we could prepare on the home planet. But you are weak as yet. Today, then, you shall range only in this immediate vicinity, nourishing yourselves; if possible you will contact other members of our race if such still exist nearby."

After the twins had disappeared into the swamps, she said to him, "And we?"

He touched antennae with her briefly again to express tender affection. "You shall stay here, while I reconnoiter. I suggest that you gather food for my return so that this effort will be spared me. The need to study the Earthlings is the paramount one. We must not destroy them until we know more of their hunting methods."

"Destroy them?" she said weakly.

"Sister, our task is a considerable one. The training I have given you should be indication

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enough of how vital the situation is. And do you think the Higher Council would have sent me, the Third Salaone..."

"The third!"

"...unless the moment were of great seriousness?"

"I have been highly honored."

"The honor is mine, Sister." His voice was again gentle.

He turned then and disappeared into the live oaks, the palms, the cypress, the trailing vines and the everywhere present Spanish moss drooping sadly over this water-wasteland.

He spent the larger part of the day across the river from the hunter camp, spying upon them. And at day's end he had cemented an opinion formed the day before. Given his training, neither he nor his fellow Denebians need fear the Earthlings. Hiding from them was simplicity itself; it would take inordinary bad luck to fall victim to these self-styled sportsmen.

Possibly a few centuries ago these humans had been competent hunters, but the finesse had gone. Semi-hysterical Denebians, thrown to the verge of mental collapse by the pressures put upon them, might fall victim to the guns. Or a half-starved alien, lacking knowledge of how to sustain himself, might finally succumb. But otherwise? It was laughable—given his training.

WHEN NIGHT fell, he returned to the glade where he had first met his sister Denebian. As he had expected, neither she nor the twins had been bothered by the clumsy hunters. The twins had evidently fed fabulously; he was amazed at the extent to which they had already filled out. When peace was finally established with Earth, it would pay Deneb to exchange agriculturists with this aggressive planet.

She, too, had fed and now showed little signs of her ordeal. She greeted him respectfully.

The Salaone held up a small wriggling creature. "You have seen these, Sister?"

"Ah, don't hold it so tightly, Salaone. They are very fragile. Yes, I have seen them."

"If I studied the Earthling books correctly, it is a coral snake," he said thoughtfully,

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holding it more closely behind the head, so that its efforts to continue to bite him were thwarted.

"But why did you bring it?"

"You know where there are others?"

"In a grove nearby, a former fruit grove, I believe. There is a nest."

He said, "We must improvize, and I believe this is our weapon, Sister. I have found earth reptiles to be harmless to us; but these, in particular, are extremely poisonous to humans." He told them his plans in detail.

"We shall rest now and feed. And tomorrow as well, since we are too few as we are. But then we shall have to take action." The Salaone turned to the twins. "This world's plant life seems highly suited to our metabolism. Is your health adequate?"

One of them acted as spokesman. "It seems excellent, Salaone."

He said thoughtfully, "Then I suggest that you twin tonight, if you have no objections."

Their twin-mother said to him worriedly, "You do not think that this is too soon...?"

"Perhaps, a little; and I am as aware of the fact as you, Sister. However, as you have pointed out, this planet's food is excellent. They have filled out until already they are all but fully adult. Time is so important. We must move fast before, through whatever accident or misfortune, Earthling authorities learn of my presence here and what it can mean."

"You know best, Salaone."

He looked at her quickly. "I am sorry, Sister. I had no wish to assert authority. It is simply that I have been prepared for this task."

"I realize, Salaone. I was not chiding you. And, if we need additional assistance, perhaps tonight again." She stopped shyly.

"But, Sister, you have fully recovered?"

"I believe sufficiently."

IV

THEY RESTED and fed through the next day, taking what precautions were necessary to avoid the hunters. In the evening, the eight of them pro-

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ceeded, Indian file, in the direction of the hunter camp.

The Salaone had been well trained, and through him the others. Where his training had been inadequate, his experience of the past several days now stood him in good stead. Each of them carried two of the tiny colorful reptiles; and after swimming the dark waters of the St. Johns, they approached the tents and vehicles crawling. Moisture and hyacinth bulbs dripped from them.

The fat human, of the disagreeable voice and the gaudy clothes, had a tent of his own. The Salaone had spotted that fact on the first night; now he made his way toward it. He alone bore no snakes.

The Earthling lay upon an army cot, on his back, his reddish face surly even in sleep. He snored deeply and in exhaustion; hiking through the swamps and palmetto fields ill-suited his physical condition.

Next to the cot was a camp stool, not exactly comfortable for the Denebian but suitable enough. The Salaone sat himself upon it, the gun in his hand, and waited a full ten minutes for the others to accomplish their disagreeable tasks. He could hear sounds of struggle and even brief screams, smothered, but the element of terror in them.

He wondered how many of the humans were to die of the venom, how many by other, and even more violent method. To him there seemed a certain poetic justice in the fugitives finding their weapons in the very swamps into which they had been driven.

Shortly, two of the twins appeared at the entry of the tent. Their voices held repugnance but one of them reported, "All of the others have been dispatched, O Salaone. Our twin-mother and the others have established themselves as sentries but there seems no danger."

THE EARTHLING awoke, and for a moment looked at them unseeingly, as though still in dream.

Then he sat up quickly. "Dennies!"

His hand snaked out for the rifle which stood beside his bed and the Salaone moved quickly, although almost gently, and brushed the Earthling's hand from its goal. "No," he said.

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The fat Earthling sat there, his small eyes widening as full realization came to him. Then he screamed shrilly, *"Boys! Help! Help, Dennies!"*

The Salaone said, "The others are no longer alive, I am sorry to say. Necessity... the necessity of war..."

The other bugged his eyes. "You killed them!" The horror was overwhelming.

If laughter had been a Denebian quality, the Salaone would have laughed at that point. Instead he said, "You have no knowledge of how difficult it was, Earthling. However, I suggest that you consider the reason for your presence here before indignation overcomes you."

"But...but...we're *human!*"

One of the twins said, "Yes," as though that one word encompassed everything.

"Bring him along," the Salaone said to his two Denebians, getting up from his stool and making for the door.

He led the way to the larger of the two vehicles and indicated the TV-phone. "How is it operated?"

The other tightened his plump mouth, and again the Denebian might have laughed bitterly, had that been his nature. Instead he said, "There are several things we shall learn from you, including the use of this instrument and the use of these weapons. Other things too, such as the method of operating your vehicles. But first I wish to use this device."

The Earthling said nothing and the Salaone's voice became deceptively mild. "You are familiar undoubtedly with the pressure tanks in which members of our race are placed by your military intelligence in effort to extract from them secrets of our defense."

There were two or three beads of moisture on the fat man's upper lip. He was afraid, the Denebian realized. He knew the extent of this Earthling's emotion, although he himself was largely unaffected by fear. A race, though, that would utilize torture must of necessity have a highly developed sense of fear and of terror itself. The Denebian played upon this.

He looked into the other's eyes. "Our civilization is a thousand times as old as your

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own, Earthling. Have you any conception of the tortures we have been able to evolve in that time?"

BOTH OF the Denebian twins looked at him, but he ignored their surprise. The ability to falsify had been trained into him—at some difficulty; he had not passed it on to their twin-mother, and consequently they didn't possess it themselves.

The Earthling's knees weakened perceptibly, and for a moment the alien thought the man was about to collapse. It was an interesting study of human psychology. The fear of the unknown was probably as effective as if the Denebians had actually resorted to violence.

He blurted, all but incoherently, "Yes, *yes,* I'll do it. I'll tell you. I'll tell you what you want."

The twins turned their surprise to the human at this point. They were physically incapable of betraying their race.

He told them.

The Salaone thoughtfully took the butt of his handgun and broke the TV-phone's viewer. Then he flicked switches, dialed a number, and picked up the hand mike and said, "This is Sam Owens. I've got a hunter's camp here at the former site of the town of Astor on the St. Johns. Two of my party are leaving, tomorrow. Send me a couple of long-range 'copters with chauffeurs." He repeated their location, then flicked off the set when the other end had acknowledged.

He sent one of the twins for the other Denebians, and disclosed the situation to them.

"We'll capture the helicopters," he said, "and in a few days two of us will go to Yucatan and another two to the Rocky Mountain area. It is manifest what must be done upon arrival. Still later, we shall have to take measures to discover where the hunting ranges are on the other continents, and even to drop some of our fellows into the more inhabited sections of this rather strange world."

He turned back to the fat Earthling.

"In a week or two, after we have learned what we can from you—the use of your weapons, and such—you will be sent back to your authorities with a

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message from me. A message I attempted to deliver in person almost a month ago but which was ignored. Instead, I was first tortured then sent to the hunting range."

He sat down, wearily now. "The difficulties which have developed between our two races could have been avoided had you humans made more effort to investigate our nature. Instead, you seem to have assumed that basically we are like you."

THE EARTHLING had recovered a little of his courage. "Like hell," he snapped. "You're like a bunch of ants. The galaxy won't be safe until we've wiped you out."

"I'm sure you think so," the Denebian said politely, "however, that is quite impossible for you to accomplish."

"That's what you think. Every battle we get into with you inhuman monsters, we win. We've already captured three of your colonies and completely wiped out your populations on them. When we get our *big* fleet built, we'll head for the Deneb planets themselves!"

The alien closed his eyes in pain. "That was before," he said. "Haven't you Earthlings ever wondered why it was so easy for your spacecraft to defeat our own? Why our colonies collapsed before your attacks?"

The other grunted sarcastically. "That's obvious. We're better than you."

The Denebian said softly, "The reason is because we had no military."

The Earthling scowled at him blankly.

"For ten thousand of your years and more," the Denebian said, "we have had no soldiers nor need for them."

"No soldiers! What in the hell do you call yourself? On the face of it, you've had military training."

The Denebian looked off into an unknown distance and there was pain on his face that even the alien Earthman could see. He said, his voice so gentle now as almost not to be heard. "I am the first soldier my race has produced for ten millennia. The need was forced upon us. The requisite knowledge came from the perusal of your own historical literature; even our libraries no longer contained such information."

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HE TOOK breath. "Now listen well, because this you must tell your authorities. When man began to reach out to the stars he early came in contact with our race. And immediately he attacked, assuming that our nature was the same as his own. Why he thought thus, I make no pretention of knowing.

"The efforts we made to placate man, were availess. Overnight your propagandists had manufactured a thousand tales of our cruelties, our viciousness, our sinister plots and devices. All of this was sheer nonsense. Shortly, even your own military and other officials began to believe the propaganda which they themselves had ordered invented. This in particular astonished us.

"That and your ability to exaggerate and prevaricate. One of your warcraft would fire upon and destroy a peaceful tanker or freighter, and then your radio would scream descriptions of a great interstellar battle in which Earth had emerged triumphant. So convinced did you become that these exaggerations were truth that your militarists themselves concocted dreams of huge fleets of Denebians, threatening attack upon the Solar System. Perhaps this fear was the greatest factor in saving us from being overwhelmed at your first onslaught."

The fat Earthling was staring unbelievingly at him.

The Salaone went on. "As you say, you have conquered three of our colonies. Had you but known it, you could have conquered all the others as well, and with as little effort. You see, Earthman, we had no defences."

"You mean you're going to let me take this message to our officials? Why our fleet will..."

The Denebian shook his head, utilizing a human gesture. "I used the past tense. We *had* no soldiers. Pushed by necessity, we trained one."

"One! You're the only one? Against the whole Solar System!"

"I *was* the only one until these past few days. Now, as you see, there are eight of us. By tomorrow morning, there will be sixteen. I told you, Earthman, that you made your mistake in failing to study our

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nature. You make some sweeping statement such as, *you're like a bunch of ants,* but then you fail to really investigate. I assure you, our society, our socio-economic system, above all our systems of education and reproduction differ so widely from your own that you will someday realize that *your* way of life is more nearly like the ant than *ours*. At least the ant is a fellow life form of your planet. But we are *really* alien."

The fat man snorted. "If you trained these seven Dennies of yours in just the last couple of days, let me tell you they're not soldiers. It takes years to make a good soldier. You don't know what you're talking about; you're sunk, Denny!"

THE DENEBIAN was about through now. He finished up his lecture. "You still aren't bothering to listen, Earthman, to a description of just a few of our natural qualities. Our education is different. In a matter of a few hours, every Denebian on a planet can be taught a new art—even that of warfare, if necessary. All we need do is train *one man.* Given physical contact, he is enabled to give all, or part, of the contents of his brain to his fellow Denebian. These seven that you see with me, already have all the warrior tactics in which I was trained. They in their turn can pass them on.

"You see, Earthman, we decided that the place to fight mankind, if fight we must, is on the planet of its birth. It has been a long time since you have had guerrilla warfare but you shall have it now.

"The reason I am sending you back to your authorities is so that you can describe the situation that confronts your race. We Denebians want peace so badly that we are even willing to fight for it."

The fat man sneered openly. "There aren't enough of you to make any difference. Our police can round you up in a few days."

The Salaone said, "That is why we are not releasing you for a week or two, Earthling. As I explained, we have eight soldiers now. In the morning, it will be sixteen.

"You have ten fingers on your hands, Earthling, I suggest you consider the ramifications of geometric progression."

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LUCK, INC.

by Jim Harmon

Luck, Incorporated worked through the Probability Warp, stacking the cards in favor of the customer who paid the standard fee first. But there were some customers LINC did not want — like Tan Eck, who wanted them to make it possible for him to work magic.

"IT JUST doesn't ante up right, the way people are always eager to kill off their good luck," Eddie Valesq said over the coffee dixies on my desk. "Why should they want to murder you?"

"Who wants to murder the golden goose this time?" I asked my Chief of Investigations.

"Typical psychotic file." He sailed a sheet of paper across to me.

It was yellow second sheet-stuff with words and letters on it trimmed from faxsheets.

> To the Baron
> your NEW *domain*
> will be hell you will
> not Continue to rule
> This *planet* earth
> through the Guise *of*
> Luck, Inc. I *will*
> kill You *AT* Your
> Earliest Convenience
> *THE* assassin

I handed over the paper. "I don't like the part where he says we are running the world at Luck, Inc. There's too much of that kind of thing whispered around."

Valesq looked sour. "Every reasonable man knows that LINC only stacks the cards in the favor of the customer who

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pays us our standard fee first. The Probability Warp your old man's old man invented is only a tool, no more dangerous than a hammer. Anything else is superstition."

"Right. Well adjusted people know we only twist this continium closer to a universe where chance was on their side, an alternate world where things worked out the way they *should*. When the co-ordinant systems get so close, naturally some of it rubs off in Favorable Inertia."

Eddie nodded eagerly. "People understand that we have no control over fate at Luck, Inc. No one *has* to deal with us. They can let their rivals pay us scale first if they want to. Everybody knows that, no matter what the Determinists say."

"Nothing could be plainer," I said. "Take this file Anne sent into me. A man named Dekker, over at MWB studios, writes background music for flickers—he wants to be head man of A&R sections, instead of Michael Falwain."

"Have they ran a Peep on the situation?"

"Yes. It shows a strong affinity for a world track where Falwain takes over and becomes a vital modern composer."

"I suppose LINC must regretfully refund Dekker's retainer?"

I OSCILLATED my head, and punched the file with a perferated OK for the IBM. "No. Dekker gets the job. It means destroying some creative art but we have to keep up our quota of successes. If people stop coming to us, we lose our legal out for interfering in crucial decisions."

"Frank," Valesq said, "the public knows we don't make moral judgments on our clients, but we know different. How long can we keep it a secret?"

"Long enough, I hope, to let your and Anne's kids grow up. I'd hate for them to have to see their parents and good old Uncle Frank Baron burned at the stake."

"Easy. Anne and I aren't married yet. And we don't have any kids yet."

"Glad to hear it. Hate to think of you and Anne settling down. The three of us had some great times together."

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Eddie nodded. "Some of it by two's. But for the past couple of years you've been sober even on the job."

"The Old Man of the Atlantic is riding my shoulders," I said seriously. "Higher every day."

"You just inherited this business from an old man who hated your father. The responsibility for old Baron's frankenstein isn't yours."

"Who else's then?"

The emergency bell rang.

"Breakthrough!" Eddie said unnecessarily.

We scrambled to our feet and headed for the door. It opened in our faces and Anne Tremaine stood there as cool and self-possessed as ever.

"Never mind, gentlemen. It's been taken care of. I've received the report."

I LET THE adrenalin try to soak back into my glands. "Small hole?"

"Small enough. Listen, when you two have a free moment, I want to introduce you to somebody."

"Who?" I asked her.

"Frank Baron, Jr." she said. "Now's a fine time to tell me this," Valesq yelped.

"I find that hard to believe."

"Really?" she asked. "Well, he just came through the Breakthrough."

Eddie Valesq grinned. "In one world of probability you found time to marry and have a family, Frank."

"Maybe." I swallowed. "Or maybe this is it—the Breakthrough into *our own world.* Maybe, for the first time, Project Intergration has succeeded in touching our own past—not some close variation in another universe."

"Why do you say that?" Anne asked.

"Remember, I'm not the first Frank Baron; that was my grandfather. I'm Frank Baron III. It was my father. . . . my son, who would be Frank Baron Jr."

"Let's go see the kid," he said quickly. "Maybe there's some way you can tell."

"I'm not sure if I want to tell. I hated my father as much as my grandfather did; and for better reason."

THE PAST—that was the one thing Luck, Inc. couldn't touch, not with grand-

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daddy's Probability Warp or with our new and secret Peepers to view future probability tracks. We were constantly at the mouth of a great river; we could travel down any tributary we chose and divert one stream into another but we could never go back up the river, to its source.

"Are you sure the kid didn't come from that track's future?" Valesq asked Wilmot belligerently.

Wilmot removed his glasses and polished them on his sleeve. "Positive. Mr. Baron was *dead* in the world we were tracking, and believe me, it was a mess. As usual, since Intergration probing began, we had the resistance circuits on full. We *must* have finally hit that soft spot we were looking for, snapped into a backtrack and broke a hole in the continuim through which the boy fell."

Eddie shook his head, unconvinced. "I'd sooner believe it was a sideslip, rather than a backtrack."

"Valesq," Wilmot said with dangerous patience "we haven't had a case of sideslipping since we developed fixed orientation—not for thirty years."

"Yeah," he admitted "but you'll have to agree that it's a lot less rare than breaking through into our own past."

I interrupted them. "Let me see the boy."

"Oh," Wilmot said "you want to see him now, Baron."

"I don't think I *want* to see him at all. But I suppose I must."

"This way, Baron."

Wilmot lead me down one of the offshoots of his administration center. "This is the first time *any* Breakthrough has resulted in holing a human being, except for the time 27 years ago when that wounded soldier came through. He lived only a few minutes."

"I remember the case," I told him.

"Of course. Sometimes I'm naive as to how much information a layman can have at his disposal. I suppose you know that our catalogue of holed objects is quite extensive, including..."

"I know what it includes, Wilmot. I may be a layman but I happen to own this damned place. I know what's going on in it."

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WE WALKED on a few paces and my chief for the Intergration Project sullenly indicated the door. "In there. Double doors, air lock-like arrangement. Use your master key. I'll be back at the hub."

I fished out my electronic pencil for decoding the tumblers, and happened to glance behind me.

"You still here?" I asked Valesq and Anne.

"Are you telling us to go away?" Eddie said.

"I'm not."

I buzzed the doors and went through on into the room.

The kid was as ugly as me and he was c r y i n g. He wouldn't have won any charm contest then, if ever. I supposed he could have been my son—or my father as a boy.

"No clothes," I observed. "Wonder why? Plenty of inorganic matter has come through the holes before."

"I want to go—*hooommme,*" the kid shrieked, ending with a little chuckling sob.

I took his chin in my palm. "Want to go home, boy? Listen to that, Eddie, Anne. He wants to go home. He came in on a bus that's run twice in 27 years and he wants it to run again, just for him."

"Frank, there's a legal problem here," Anne the Advisor said. "We are holding this boy against his will; this might be kidnapping."

"Nuts," I said. "This boy has had an accident. There are doctors here who can judge what's better for him than he's able to do for himself."

She shuddered delicately. "This cage, this antiseptic cage. Bed, plumbing, four blank walls."

"We'll get him a TV set or some books," I said, still holding on to the small face. "Hear me, boy—you've got to stay here until we can get you back where you belong. Do you understand?"

"No!" he screamed. "I want to go home!"

I hit him across the mouth. "Understand that? Y o u ' r e staying here until we tell you you can go home."

The kid lowered his eyes and his mouth became a straight line. "Yes, sir. I understand. I'll stay."

I patted his head. "Good boy. Anne, you're a woman—maybe he'll talk to you."

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"Yes." She moved to him, knelt, and held his shoulders. The boy's eyes glittered at her. Anne wasn't a large woman, but she was big enough to take care of him.

Eddie and I quit the room. He said to me "You didn't have to hit the kid, did you, Baron?"

"Who's got a better right?" I yelled. "Whether he's my son from some future or my father from our past, who's got a better right?"

Eddie didn't have an answer.

I WASN'T feeling so good by the time I reached my office. There was some aspirin in the upper right hand drawer but as I reached for it I saw the folder on my desk, one with a bright red cover.

Opening it immediately I scanned the single sheet of double-spaced typing. It neatly condensed the problem.

I thumbed the intercom: "Have them send in Dr. Tan Eck, Stacy."

Tan Eck paced in six minutes later and took a seat in front of my desk at my invitation. He was a young blond man, too handsome but rugged. The thin-rimmed steel glasses were out of place on him.

"I have a breakdown on your problem from Analysis, Doctor," I began "but sometimes there are sematic errors. Will you explain the situation to me, in your own words, and make it briefer than you think is wise. I may be able to get by on fewer details than you are in position to believe."

The research man showed strong teeth and a stronger jaw. "I know the Baron's time is valuable..."

"We don't use 'the' as an adjective around here, Doctor," I said, idily pencilling an OK on a form. "My last name is Baron; it isn't a title or rank."

Tan Eck shook his head slowly. "I didn't mean to be discourteous, but you are fighting the wind, sir. The only time people don't call you *the* Baron is in your presence."

I looked up at his cold blue eyes. "Don't you think I know that, Tan Eck? But if I don't continue to fight for the proper form of my name in public, who else is going to have any respect for it? As long as I fight it, *'the Baron'* means I'm an

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authoritarian. Accept the title and it becomes the distinction for a pompous fool."

"I suppose so, but I shouldn't have wasted part of my time-quota by arguing with you about your name. I think I can put my basic request of Luck, Inc. in one sentence."

"Commendable."

"I want you to help me put an end to the dictatorship of cause and effect in our universe," Dr. Tan Eck said.

"You mean you want to produce results—physical products and changed relationships—without following the steps of causal action?"

"More or less. Think of it as a further violation of the maxim of conservation of energy. Atomic energy has been violating this principle for years; I want to go a step further."

I PULLED over a blank form, pencil in hand. "Outline the areas of activity in which you hope to become engaged through the application of your invention or process."

"Matter duplication and production. That is, producing original objects, and duplicating any existing ones, without the use of matter or energy. Arranging favorable states and conditions without the loss of time or energy. Giving a man an education without his having to work for it; making a wife and husband securely and blissfully in love, without the difficulties of either courtship or adjustment."

I laid down my pencil. "You would invade the working areas of many of our customers, Doctor."

"I would participate in those areas but I wouldn't monopolize them. I couldn't hold a monopoly any more than they can."

"True," I admitted. "But this line of research you want us to help you with—is it biological, electronic...?"

"Mechanical. Based on the fundamental principles of motion, and another factor..."

I glanced at my watch.

"The additional factor has been necromancy, an invocation to various demons and gods for aid in making our experiment a success."

I made a careful notation. "You say 'various' supernatural

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beings. Why not the same one each time?"

"Because they don't always co-operate! That's why I want you to help me take my machine—the Producer—out of the area of chance and make it a working, dependable device."

"LINC doesn't always succeed," I pointed out.

"But you have a better record for successful intervention than any ancient immortal."

"But in the field of necromancy..."

"Please," Tan Eck interrupted "don't think me a crackpot. I know that these invocations do not really snag divine or infernal help. The method by which we achieve success is different, but the result is the same. I don't know *why* these elements of necromancy make the Producer work—sometimes—but they do. Whatever the reason, magic is too unreliable. I want you to make for permanent success."

"DOCTOR, magic is unreliable," I told him. "You are asking Luck, Inc. to help you unleash magic on the modern world. With your Producer operating, no man will be able to have confidence in anything. We won't even be able to know which way is up—levitation can play hell with gravity. When cause and effect goes out the window, your wife may go out the door. She may be instantly in love with the next unappetizing stranger. The Producer, in producing logically unrelated states, would be as good as a love potion. The social order will crumble—how will you know whether a man mortgaged a year's salary for his Lincocad or had you produce it out of thin air for a reasonable fee."

Tan Eck waited until he was sure I had finished. "Entirely correct. My invention may well mean the end of human civilization. Now that we have cleared up that amusing philosophical point; how much do you want to do the job? Or have you started making moral decisions, decisions of rule, as the Determinist party claims?"

"Of course not," I lied with practiced speed, "but you must realize you are asking us to jeopardize the interests of our clients."

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"Every warping of probability in somebody's favor, jeopardizes someone else. That's not the meaning of 'Cross-purpose' under the Warp Bill. No one else has hired you to do this particular thing before. No? Then how can you refuse me?"

I thought about how I could refuse him, because that's exactly what I was going to do. Luck, Inc. couldn't let anyone gain the unlimited power of magic, any more than the patent office could grant a crank the rights to the wheel or let him copyright the alphabet.

"Before you say anything," Tan Eck continued "I think I should tell you that while I'm not a registered D. P. I have friends high in the Determinist Party. They are willing to help me force this through as a test case. Refuse me without cause, and you will prove you are not serving this country, but controlling it!"

I didn't question him. Even if he were lying, the Determinists would help him as soon as they heard. Let him turn the Earth into a madhouse of magic if it proved Luck, Inc. was not acting entirely impartially to all, particularly them.

"I'll think it over," I said.

"You can," he agreed "until midnight."

THE POSSIBILITY of failure hadn't been discussed by Tan Eck and myself. I knew he would not accept a simple Negative Prognosis, explanations of chancial drift and incompatibility void. He would yell "Fake!" to the D. P.'s as soon as he saw the report. And he would be right; we had never yet encountered a single situation where we couldn't noticibly influence it by the inertia of a compatibly warped positive probability. Of course, the area of Effectity was limited—you couldn't make the world simply wonderful by selecting a Utopia from the infinite possibilities and bringing it alongside. That would be too big a job to focus.

As I was thinking, the facsimile unit on my desk printed an Offbeat pulse. Some little guy in Maine wanted to be the strongest man in the world. There was no cross-purpose; our previous customer for the position was dead of a knotted

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hernia. I checked the minimum fee box, punched it OK and fed it back. I was a little sore at the lunkhead cybernetic sorter who couldn't understand the concept of 'important'. Who gave a damn who the strongest man in the world was? Not even the second strongest man—he would probably have enough sense to distinguish himself in some other, important way. *His* application, I might want to see.

The interruption might have been a good thing. Brooding was no good. I picked up my phone and placed a call.

Presently the dialscreen focused on the homely, shock-haired face of Gaylord Prince, titular head of the Determinist Party.

"Mr. Prince," I said "we may not agree on many things, but I hope we can come to an understanding about a certain problem that has come up." I didn't really have any hope at all, but I had to try.

"This is a coincidence, Baron. Your call has been relayed to my coptercar. I'm on my way to see you now."

"Oh? About Tan Eck, I presume."

"Who?"

"You will die before midnight. The Assassin sees it."

"Threatening me, Baron! I'm not surprised." But we were both doing a lot of lying, this call.

"That isn't me, Prince," I said quietly. "The voice is similar to yours. Could easily be a doctored recording."

"You will die."

"See what I mean?" I asked him.

"Are you trying to tell me there's a third party on this line?"

The click was clear and solid. "There was," I said.

"I don't believe it. You were threatening to kill me, Baron."

"Which way is your flyer headed now?"

"Still towards your office, Baron. In politics, a man doesn't let a little thing like a threat of murder stop him."

"COME RIGHT in!" I said with what I knew was false heartiness.

Prince was a sour-looking old man with a tanned, wrinkled hide that had turned to leather around his neck. He entered and without apparent

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hesitation shook hands with me. I knew immediately that all social gestures were meaningless formalities to him.

"This is a major break in protocol," I said to him, offering him the visitor's chair. "A prince shouldn't come calling on a Baron." I chuckled foolishly.

"*I* am not *a* Prince, Mr. Baron—to me, that is only a label."

It had been a stupid overture, inviting the usual cheap play on my name. Why had I offered the opening? Was I a masochist, or maybe did I secretly like being thought of as some kind of aristocrat?

"I believe," I said "you stated you were coming here when I called, Prince. What did you want to see me about?"

The old man pursed his thin lips. "Who is Tennant?"

Obviously, he meant Tan Eck—he hadn't got the name correct even from listening to a recording of our conversation.

"Mr. Prince, I have decided that if you don't know, I simply am not going to tell you. Do you still want to tell me why you wanted to see me in the first place?"

After a second, Prince nodded and seemed to forget about "Tennant". "Yes, Mr. Baron, I'll tell you. As titular head of the Determinist Party, I want to hire Luck, Inc. to help put the probability of winning this election on our side."

"That," I said "is an unusual—but admittedly legal—request. Of course, if the D. P.'s do gain power you will immediately begin work to ruin this company, which you want to help you into office."

"We will put you out of business—but you will receive full evaluated restitution for your assets. I'm sure a man of your executive ability will have no trouble building another company and a second fortune."

"Thanks; I like this one," I said. "You are aware of the Ethical Provisions Act. If your party wins, it must be or become the more ethical of the contenders. That may mean quite a shake-up in your membership and the individual personalities of your leaders."

"Considering our opposition," Prince said drily "I don't expect any great change will be necessary to make us the more ethical."

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I SET ASIDE the forms I had been holding. "Sir, you realize that we could simply offer you a negative prognosis for successfully warping probability in your favor."

"You could, thus proving everything we said about you was true—that you do control our lives by changing probability only when you want a change."

"You don't need proof; you have your prejudices. They will be good enough cause for you to outlaw Luck, Inc. even if we help you win."

"Yes, that's settled. You won't help yourself any by helping us, but remember you are duty-bound to help even your enemies."

"I won't even promise to try until I've studied this proposition more carefully, to see if it isn't in conflict with some other client..."

"The other party isn't buying success—not with the pollsters giving it away to them, and their misguided belief that we wouldn't use something which we oppose. I'll give you until time for the evening news summary before announcing your illegal refusal to accept our assignment. That's eleven o'clock in this time zone, I believe."

"I imagine that would rate a bulletin. Would you mind giving me until midnight?"

"Midnight? Very well, call it that."

"Thanks, I'm a methodical man. I like to keep things neat, even."

Prince stood up, his eyes still moving over my face speculatively. "Too bad we had to be on opposite sides in this thing, Baron. I'll expect to hear from you then?"

"You can *expect* it, Mr. Prince, but I don't guarantee that you will."

"SO BLANK it's black on the 'phone call," Valesq reported. "We don't know where the second voice came from during the Prince call."

"It could have come from Prince's coptercar, couldn't it?" I asked. "A recording, a second man—even Prince changing his voice."

Eddie Valesq shrugged. "Possible. But even if Prince is stooping to sick threats like that, he probably would take the precaution of staging a real

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break-in from outside. We *could* have placed the voice inside the car if we had been focused in on it."

"This is one of the times we need access to the past. If we could integrate the time stream, it would be simple to look back there and see if Prince was responsible for the Assassin's threat. What'll we find if we check alternate probabilities? In one universe, Prince did make the threat; in another he didn't. In a third, you made the threat, Eddie, just before you rushed in here and killed me."

He nodded thoughtfully. "You can control the future from the present but it would be easier by going into the past. The past is stable—the present is too slippery—it becomes tomorrow too easily."

I checked over the reports. "A profound thought for a Thursday afternoon. I'm not to the report on Tan Eck. What's it say?"

"He's pretty much what he claims. A research physicist, subsidized by Westinghouse. Private laboratory in New Haven. Typical Scientist-Engineer's contract: they pay his bills and get first option on anything he comes up with, *if* he wants to sell it. Never understood why those pirates get first crack at something instead of the inventor selling it on the open market, just because they subsidize him. Where would industry be without research?"

"Times change. A few years ago researchers would be happy with that kind of contract. What else?"

"He was married to Ellen Schweitz, heiress to a middling hunk of the Kola-Kicks fortune. She was killed, along with 437 others, in a Pan-Europe crash—Tan Eck was one of the two survivors. He's invented several specialized, technical gadgets for industry. Minor innovations that were technologically overdue. That's all the meat in the report."

"Thanks." I had come to the report and now put it aside. "Anything strike you as unusual about the man, Eddie?"

"Yeah, he rediscovered magic and made it work."

I NODDED. "That's part of it; the man's a fortune prone."

"That Pan-U crash makes

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him sound more like an accident prone."

"Not when he was one out of two who escaped. Look at the record. The man has what is really a pretty cushy job with prestige, privileges, and money—despite your remarks to the contrary. He marries a rich girl and by the time he gets tired of her, she gets killed and he gets her money. Tan Eck makes important but 'obvious' (to paraphrase you) inventions. Finally, he stumbles across what amounts to magic—wish-fulfillment in full. Tan Eck is probably the luckiest man who ever lived!"

"If he is," Eddie growled suspiciously "he's all his own man. There's no record of his ever trying to buy luck from us before. We're a benevolent monopoly like telephones and telegraph, so there's no place else for him to go."

"He doesn't need to go anyplace."

"I can think of someplace for him to go. I don't want to live in a world where roses turn to snakes. Sounds psychotic to me."

I grunted affirmatively.

The intercom winked at me, but it was still electricity, not necromancy; I answered it.

ANNE TREMAINE rolled up the screen into view, her cheeks flushed pink. She still looked good to me, but I remembered she was Eddie's girl now.

"Frank," she said hoarsely, "I think the boy is going into Trauma. I couldn't get anything more out of him than his name, 'Frank Baron, Jr.' and the fact that as soon as he didn't have to stay here, he wanted to go home. Wilmot wanted to use sodium pentathol but I stopped him."

"Why?"

"I'll answer that, Frank, when I have at least fifteen minutes to yell at you. There isn't time now. I've heard from one of the girls that there's a rumor..."

"A rumor, hmm? That's faster than Eddie's intelligence any—well, some days. What is it?"

"We didn't get all of our leaks and plants last time. The government is sending over a man. I don't like to think what will happen if the boy dies. The government is under pressure.

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There'll be corporative and personal charges against us."

"Against *me*, Anne," I corrected. "It's fixed so all responsibility reverts to me."

"That's the way you want it," her voice caught "but don't you know yet that not everybody wants to let you have things your own way."

"I'll be right over," I told her.

THE BOY was having a chill on the bed, the sheet up around his throat. His eyes were open, glittering with the heat and the cold inside his body, staring at me.

"How long has he been like this?" I asked.

"I called you when it started," Anne said. "Looks like shock to me, but I haven't been a nurse for several years; I'm probably rusty. Wilmot administered a trace curare solution. I looked him over. No knotted muscles I could feel."

"He stood the shock of transition. . . ."

"Did he?" Anne questioned. "It took time for him to realize he was in a different world."

"I don't think he is capable of realizing that. Anything else happen that could account for the shock?"

Anne moistened her tastefully painted mouth. "You beat him."

"I *hit* him. But he has been beaten at times. See that back of his?"

"Yes."

"A little slap isn't going to cause a kid who's gone through *that* to wilt."

Anne touched me—it was the first time in months. "He glanced towards us; he heard us. He can't be completely out."

"Do you have any objections to a little light hypnosis?"

She looked at the boy. "No. It can't do him any harm now."

I reached out my hand towards his face. His cheek ticked in the shadow of my palm, but when my fingertips only brushed his eyes a line in his throat relaxed. I kept stroking his eyes and whispering to him quietly.

"Okay, open your eyes, 'Frank Baron, Jr.'"

His small black eyes opened.

"Is that really your name?" I asked him.

"I guess so. That's what they call me."

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"What's your father's name?"

"Daddy." He snickered; he was making fun of me.

"No stalling. What's his legal name. You're old enough to know that."

His eyebrows jerked up towards his hairline in stages, his breathing came more rapidly. "I don't. I don't know."

"Temporary amnesia," Anne suggested. "He's had a middling bad shock."

"Could be," I admitted reluctantly. "Look, kid, you remember if you *have* a father. Is he alive?"

The eyes went wide. "Look out! *Look out!*"

THE BOY must be remembering how his father had died, I decided. Yet he didn't seem to be in a state of recall. He seemed to be looking at me and seeing me; and something else.

I ducked and the blast seared right across the kid's blankets, scorching them to rust. The only thing I could see out of the perimeter of my sight was a hand with a gun in it, inserted through the door.

Moving like a sidewinder, I made the threshold and slid the door shut fast, past the safety ease, on the wrist of the gun hand. Fingers exploded apart and the weapon dropped into my own palm. But then the hand wiggled out of the crack; the door came shut, and, infuriatingly latched.

By the time I had used my key the corridor was empty. There was no need to notify Eddie Valesq's security guards. They were on a constant alert, specially since the threats had begun in earnest.

I was finally realizing how deadly earnest those threats had been.

"Are you all right?" I asked Anne. It was a silly question; she had never been in the line of fire.

"Fine." Her face was flushed and for once her hair was disarrayed.

"How's the boy?"

"He's all right. The blast never touched him, only the bedclothes. He seems in natural sleep."

I nodded. "I can see. With a smile on his face. The last thing he saw was somebody getting ready to shoot me in the back."

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"But he warned you."

I snorted. "Instinctively. But he thinks that it fortunately wasn't in time."

"You don't think he is your son—or some Frank Baron's son from another probability track."

"No. I think he's my father, from our past."

"And you hate him," Anne said. "You never told me why you hated your father. Why did you?"

"Why does any boy hate his father? I didn't want to, but he made me—he hated me. Wait, I'll tell you about it. My grandfather and his only son both fell in love with the same girl. Old man Baron, the inventor of the probability warp, was only about forty, a widower, and the son was half that. The son married the girl, my mother, and against medical advice, they decided to have a child—me. My mother died. Grandfather blamed my father—my father blamed me. I never found out who Mother had a grudge against."

"Your grandfather left you the business and the invention."

"Of course. After Dad died. He wouldn't let him benefit from anything, even through me. We lived in what used to be Hell's Kitchen. The name still fits. In the closing years of his life, Dad became what might be described as a sadist. I was handy."

"Frank, I know you pretty well. You couldn't be planning on taking out revenge on a boy who would become your father."

"Why not?" I asked. "He couldn't appreciate things the way I did if he was full grown, could he?"

"YOU HAVE ten minutes left before midnight," Dr. Tan Eck said, seating himself across my desk. "Do you have your decision for me so soon?"

"Yes, Doctor. I have three appointments for midnight and I think I may as well give you the courtesy of hearing my answer first."

"I warn you again, Mr. Baron—refuse me, and I'll go straight to the faxsheets and the government."

"There should be a government agent here shortly, Tan

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Eck. One of my associates, Miss Tremaine, has been systematically losing him in the esoteric corridors of this building; but he should have located one of his own spies by now who will lead him here."

"Am I going to have to file a complaint with him?" The young scientist smiled charmingly.

"That's your choice. However, Luck, Inc. is *not* going to help you. Your application is refused. We believe unleashing magic in the modern world is not in the public interest."

"There's no such provision in the Warp Bill!" Tan Eck ranted. "If there were, who's to interpret it? You've set yourself up as judge, jury, censor, guardian of public morals. You're a *scoundrel*, Barton."

"True enough. But not a killer like you."

Tan Eck leaned back, his face entirely transparent. He was an emotional man. "What do you mean?" he said calmly enough.

"You had to be the man who tried to shoot me, the one who has probably been threatening me as the Assassin," I said. "I trust the people who work with me—except the spies—and I know from my own spies that that government isn't out to kill me, not just now. Who could get in a place as well-guarded as this, and find me, and escape? Somebody with an astronomical amount of luck, a fortune-prone like you—the most pronounced specimen of the breed I've ever known."

"That might all be true," Tan Eck admitted "but that still doesn't give you the authority to refuse my application for Warp aid."

"I think it does. Listen, Doctor, I don't know whether you know it or not, but your machine—this 'Producer', without all the magic-mumbo—is an illegal patent violation of the Probability Warp! That's what we practice here—magic. At least that's what it would have been called once. But we can't use it indiscriminately, not the way you want to. It has to be used sparingly, under s t r i c t supervision."

TAN ECK'S lips were thin and his eyes wide. "Under

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your supervision, Baron. Yes! I knew what I had found. . . ."

"By luck," I interjected politely.

". . . By my unique genius, and I knew what you were doing with it. You see, I entirely agree with you—the world can't stand magic, not even a little bit when that magic is controlled by one man. Either all must have it or none."

"Preferably none?"

"Yes, I think it is better if the device—Producer—Probability Warp—is suppressed as completely as poison gas or bacteriological warfare."

"I'm sure you do," I told him. "Not because, as a scientist, you can't stand to see your basic belief in cause and effect violated; not because, as a lover of freedom, you can't stand to see 'magical' powers in the hands of one man; but because if everybody or even one man has this device, he can be luckier than you are. And you've been luckier than everybody else all your life. You can't stand a threat to that—that's why you want to kill me."

Tan Eck's eyes looked much the same as the boy's had earlier.

I coughed discreetly. "Before you reach for that spy-proofed gun, doctor, I might point out to you that with all your luck, you have never pulled off what might be properly described as a miracle. There are a *large* number of guns focused directly on you."

"Believe him, Tan Eck," Eddie Valesq's voice intoned.

"I expected that," he said numbly. "I knew that I would probably get killed murdering you, but there would be a chance, I thought. I'd *certainly* die, wouldn't I?"

"You would. Now get up and get out. Don't try using that invention of yours. If you do, I'll sue you for something as mundane as patent infringment. With more experience at manipulating probability, and even more money than you, I'm bound to win."

He nodded. "I think you would. I feel somehow my luck's run out. It might be better to let your men kill me as I try to kill you. But there's just a chance it wouldn't."

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PRINCE came in as Tan Eck shuffled out.

"Your other midnight appointment." he said.

"Two others, Mr. Prince. Now for the third—LINC rejects your application for Warp aid. Conflict of interests."

"You have no other political party as a client. None of them want to risk being changed by the ethical provisions."

"But we have a client who *doesn't* want an anti-LINC party to get into power. Ourselves—our public relations department hires us to work for our own interests. I think I remembered there was such a thing as self-interest when somebody was trying to kill me."

"This won't look good for you in the news," Prince said narrowly. "I intend to fight you every step of the way, Baron."

"Fine, Mr. Prince. I am a dangerous man; it's absolutely essential that there is somebody to fight me every step of the way."

Prince hesitated, then nodded briefly and left.

Eddie Valesq and Anne entered through a private passage.

"The government man is with the boy. He seems better; he's conscious; but he's still blank. They'll be trouble." Anne was worried.

"There won't be any evidence for trouble. I'm having Wilmot send the boy back where he came from."

"Is there a way back?" Eddie demanded.

"Of course. I've known that all along. Wilmot has been too cocky. He's holding out on me for personal gain. Technological advances come fast in this age—nobody could work on what amounts to refinement of an existing process and not come up with some kind of an answer in twenty years."

"Then you don't want any revenge on the boy?" Anne said, almost happily.

I GRINNED. "I'm getting plenty of revenge. I'm sending him right back to grow up and go through hell."

"You can't do that to your own father," she protested. "Listen, Frank, we don't know that anything like a time paradox exists. Why can't Eddie and I raise him here? I can guarantee Eddie isn't going to

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want his girl when he grows up."

I exhaled. "All right. I have to tell you the rest of it. I tried to shut myself off from the kind of life I went through as a kid, and I succeeded pretty well. But I've had to think about it lately. I grew up in a tough neighborhood. My name was the same as my father's, but could I call myself 'Franklyn Baron the Third'. Not if I didn't want kids to beat my pants off to see if they had lace on them. I was 'Junior Baron'. That kid is *me*, from the past."

"We would still like to keep him here, Frank," Eddie said for the two of them. "Maybe you and he are different. You had to go through all that but maybe he doesn't."

"But he does!" I snarled. "Don't you two idiots see! In some world—probably this one—that kid is going to grow up to be me and run Luck, Inc. He has to go through the same horrible childhood and early life as I did—he has to be the same dictatorial, opinionated, egotistical, power-mad, well-meaning human monster I am. Because if the Probability Warp—Luck, Inc.—*magic* ever falls under the control of anybody soft enough to be sane, this world is washed up. Take a peep at the alternate universes where that's happened. This may not be the best of all possible worlds with me in it, but believe me when I modestly state that it becomes the worst of all possible worlds with *me—this* me—out of it."

They didn't say anything. But then I could always control them easily.

"Will one of you get me some coffee?" I said. "I think I'd better start work early this morning."

★ *Answers to the Quiz* ★

"Missile, Missile, Who's Got The Missile?"

ARMY: 1, 6, 9, 12.
NAVY: 2, 4, 7, 8, 11.
AIR FORCE: 3, 5, 10.

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No Star Shall Fall

by Wilfred Owen Morley

This happened to you — remember?

REMEMBER how startled you were when you awoke suddenly last night? For a moment you could not believe that you had been dreaming, so clear and intricately defined had been the sequences through which you had just passed. You were sure it was not merely a dream. You knew that, in some way, you had passed physically into the far-distant future, lived a portion of your own life there.

Your first impulse was to get up and write down all the memories that flooded your consciousness, for you didn't want to lose any of them. But the first shock of awakening had now passed away; you felt drowsy. You lay back thinking that you wouldn't forget this experience; you couldn't forget. Perhaps if you made just a few notes now, that would be enough. Tomorrow you would write the story in full detail.

While you were thinking thus, sleep claimed you again. Morning came and you awoke, got up, and went about your usual way of living as if nothing had happened.

But you haven't forgotten, really. Your conscious mind, occupied as it is with the business of making a living in this world, has merely shoved these memories into a corner of your

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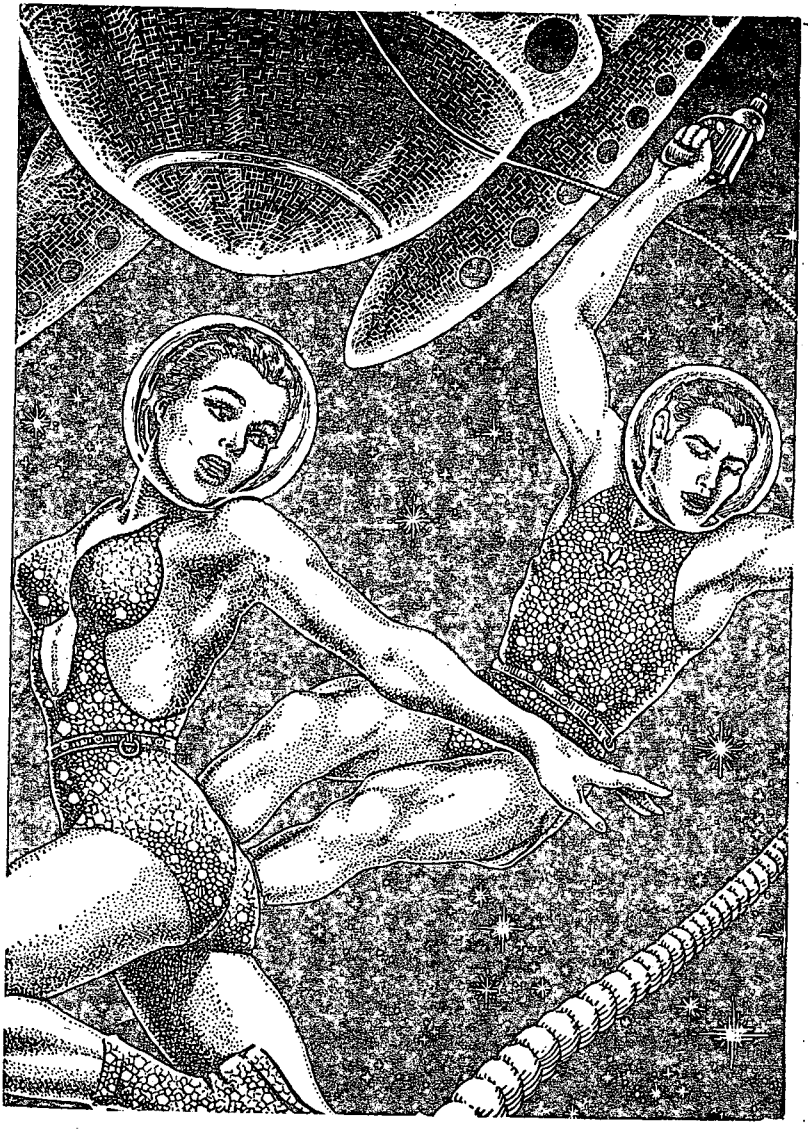

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brain. Relax. Forget about your obligations, your ambitions, your problems. Relax completely and remember. What was the first impression, now? How did it start?

TWO PEOPLE, a man and a woman strolling in the city. Both dressed in brightly colored costumes, the woman wearing a greatcape which trailed many yards behind her. For a moment, you could not believe that one of these figures was you. You thought to yourself; but I don't look like this. For you were—beautiful. That is the only word for it.

You glanced at your mate, who smiled warmly at you. Thoughtfully, you fingered your clothing, noting that it had some of the qualities of silk and some of rubber, yet was neither. Bit by bit the multitude of impressions came to you—it was as if you had been asleep for a long time; you knew all about this world, but so full of the otherworld were you that you must think in terms of it.

THIS WIDE pathway beneath you—it was resilient to your step, giving every motion a pleasant springiness. The gently curving hills to the right of you that led to an expanse of white-sanded shore, the woodland to the left of you—you knew this scene well. In the distance you saw the shafts of buildings towering into the sky. The great height of them, you knew, was sheerly ornamental.

These were not the outskirts of the city; you were strolling in the city proper. How different from the cities of that otherworld where so long you had sojourned. The people of those cities had to go far away from the metropolis to get into expanses of hills or woodlands or seashores. True, they did have parks and beaches but these were always so crowded... Was there anything at all in this otherworld to correspond with what you saw about you? Only the visions of dreamers, and a feeble suggestion at something they called a World's Fair.

But you had been strolling long enough. You grasped your companion's hand, and indicated a colored block in the wide pavement, blocks which ap-

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peared at regular intervals. Without speaking, the two of you stepped upon it, and slowly it began to sink down beneath you, coming to rest at last in a great subterranean cavern, quietly lit, completely air conditioned. A single open car was there, one which seated two comfortably. You did not see any sign of wheels, or of any other locomotive power. However, as soon as the two of you were settled—it took a moment or so to fix the greatcape comfortably—the car began moving rapidly, the cool air streaming your hair pleasantly.

YOU EMERGED from the car to find yourself in a large courtyard sort of place. The great shafts of what seemed to be several distinct buildings arose around you, although you knew that this was really but one construction. However, you had not long to look around, for your companion grasped your arm and pointed upward. You looked and gasped.

For hovering in the air, near the top of the buildings was a creature fantastic beyond your wildest dreams. Huge it was, and you thought of a titanic jellyfish and a titanic plant, and discarded both for the creature was neither. The spread of its hood must have been some thirty feet, while the many hair-like tentacles of it were easily twice that in extent. Jet black it was, devoid of any marking; it floated there, as atop the crest of sea-waves, rising and falling softly in the air-currents.

You were astonished, but you were not afraid. Deep in your brain, something tinkled, almost bell-like, then impressions began to come to you. They were not in the form of words, or even ideas, or then again definite images. Yet, you understood.

The creature was telling you, in its own manner, that it meant no harm, that it came to you for help. It wanted you to accompany it to a far place; it assured you that no danger, so far as it knew, awaited you there.

And you assented. It was the very keynote of the milieu in which you lived that none who came to you for help could be denied. For man, in this remote day, had extended his reach

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and many were the strange and alien beings known to him. Emblazoned in the great central hall of the planet, where regularly all humans within reach met to engage in a common pooling of consciousness, was the legend you had learned as early in life as you could recall.

"So long as the race endures, thus long shall mankind extend its hand to help any other beings who seek our aid. No creature shall perish; no star shall fall if it be within our power to set aside the danger."

YOU ASSENTED, even as you wondered how you would help this creature, wondered through what means you would cross the stellar void. In this otherworld where you had sojourned so long that you had nearly forgotten your own world, men struggled to build crude reaction ships for the purposes of leaping from Earth to her satellite. And some there were who envisioned greater ships reaching farther distances, but all were greatly limited.

While you were pondering, your hand stole to the wide belt you wore and touched a stud thereon, even as your companion performed the same act. You felt a slight exhilaration, and sensed that some apparatus on your shoulders—which you had assumed to be decorative—was operating. Then you realized the ground was falling away from you and you were rising, soaring upward to meet the alien.

The being's tentacles touched you and lifted you up to its great hood where a smaller membrane wrapped itself about you. You knew this was merely to secure you, to keep you from floating away into the void. For you knew now that this was a space-dweller, a creature whose natural habitat was space itself, knew that it could plunge through the starry gulf at speeds greater than light; nor did this knowledge disturb you, for man had long known, in this world of motions and velocities exceeding light.

For the veriest fragment of an instant you felt alarmed—how could you survive in the airless, heatless deeps between worlds? But even as these thoughts came to you, your greater knowledge had dispelled them. Swiftly your body

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became inert; your breath stopped; and so far as could be observed, your brain had ceased to function. Yet this was not entirely so, for in the core of your mind remained one little spark which would keep burning so long as your body were not totally destroyed.

And, back on Earth, in the great central building, within the indescribable complications of a titanic machine, a connection was made. A great eye trained itself upon you and your steed, recording your journey. And a great brain trained itself upon the spark that remained burning in the core of your being, receiving impressions no less perfectly than did your own brain when awake.

IT WAS NOT until you had returned to Earth, and your full individual consciousness had been restored, that you knew what occurred after you and the alien one had departed from Earth. You sat in the great hall, with all available members of the race to see records of this exploit, and you were no less a new spectator to these scenes than they.

You saw the creature, your mate, and yourself plunging through the deeps of space to come at last to a small star, long dead. It was about the size of Earth's moon. At one time, you knew, it had been a luminary, even as your own sun; then, as it cooled, it had supported life, even as a planet, until, finally, devoid of atmosphere and light, it now drifted aimlessly in the void, dark and lifeless.

You saw the space-creature—to whom the plunge into Earth's atmosphere had been as a man's plunge to the bottom of a deep lake to retrieve an object—finally come to rest on its surface, saw there a large group of similar creatures. And there, on the barren surface of the star, was a great building. Not only tall was it, but spread out, and the architecture was such that it suggested human construction.

These creatures, you knew, regarded this building with a sort of reverence.

YOU ENTERED the building, along with the creature who had borne you here, and

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found it to be a titanic planetarium. Here was a miniature solar system, though not the solar system of the sun you knew. There was a central group of suns and a family of planets and satellites, moving in many different planes, unlike the orbits of your own sun's family.

Trained on one of the planets was what you at once recognized as a gigantic microscope. You peered into it and were amazed to find that there were living creatures on this little miniature, which could not have been more than twenty feet in diameter. For some time you gazed at them, fascinated, even though you, yourself, were not aware of the fact at the time. And you saw further that the space-creatures regarded this miniature as a special sort of deity.

Now the space-creature was indicating what had happened. One of the moons had somehow broken away from its orbit and was heading for this planet. Eventually it would crash into the larger body, and the creatures feared that the life upon their revered world would be destroyed.

No less than you were your fellow humans in the great hall on Earth, watching the scene, moved by this, for the beings who lived upon this miniature world were very similar to humans. You now beheld yourselves examining the mechanism which kept these artificial worlds in motion, far above the planetarium's floor, finding at last a plan of the construction. Examining this plan carefully, checking with the plan against the controls, at last you found how to avert the catastrophe. If you shot off the motive power of this moon which had gone astray, it would settle slowly to the floor and all would be well. Since the whole system revolved according to plan, the individual power-leads, rather than gravitation, there would be no upset in the orbits of the other little worlds.

And, as the space-creatures hovered around you excitedly, you shut off the individual p o w e r-lead and the moon, even now dangerously close to the great s p h e r e, slowly dropped to the floor of the huge b u i l d i n g, idly rolling along until at last it came to rest.

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NOW THAT the danger was averted, you went back to the microscope to examine more carefully the sphere your actions had saved and the life upon it. A strange little world, indeed, it was, and a strange people, so much like humans in form, even for their stalk-eyes, their flower-like heads, and a third arm projecting from the center of their bodies.

Then the screen in the great chamber went blank as the being who had brought you to the dark-star prepared to return you to your home planet.

What was the purpose of this great planetarium? Why had no other buildings been observed on the dark star? Who had built the planetarium and what had become of them? How had life occurred upon this artifact? Had life also occurred on other of the miniatures? These were but a few of the questions that arose.

Before the meeting had dispersed, an expedition to go to the dark star had been formed and you and your mate had volunteered to make a study of the space-creatures for the central archives of the race.

You and your mate left the great central hall of Earth to prepare for the expedition, which would start in a few days. You retired to an abode of your own by the shore, leaving notices to all that you were not to be disturbed, for you wished to be alone together for a time before undertaking this new task.

IT WAS AT this point that you awoke, suddenly, to find yourself in a darkened room. What had happened? Where was your mate? What were you doing in this strange place?

Then you knew. Yet, even as realization came to you, there came also the certainty that this was not merely a dream, such as humans experience almost at any period of sleep. You knew that this was real, that you had lived a small part of the future, a future wherein you dwelt.

You could not forget this, you told yourself. It was all far too vivid and beautiful ever to forget. You wanted to put it in writing at that very moment, but it was so pleasant lying there and thinking about it. Perhaps just a few notes would do. Besides, there was nothing

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to worry about; you knew you could never forget it. So you lay back, smiling to yourself, until at last sleep claimed you again.

Remember?

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READIN' and WRITHIN'

BOOK REVIEWS by Calvin M. Knox

VIRGIN PLANET, by Poul Anderson. Avalon Books, $2.75.

In recent years, Poul Anderson has blossomed into one of the ablest novelists in science fiction—as attested to by his selection as Guest of Honor at the 1959 World Science Fiction Convention. This novel, written quite some time back, appeared in abridged form in the first issue of the defunct *Venture Science Fiction* in 1957. It represents a blend of the old and new Andersons—of the capable swinger of swords and inventor of cultures, and of the incisive delver into character.

The scene of the action is Atlantis, an Earth-sized moon in a complicated stellar system (described in detail by the author in an interesting postscript.) Several hundred years before the story opens, a shipload of women had crashlanded there, and a parthenogenetic culture had sprung up, with the missing male sex virtually defied.

Into this setup comes space explorer Davis Bertram, the first male to set foot on Atlantis in three centuries. He becomes the instant center of controversy, and the expected plot developments ensue.

In the first third of the book, Anderson explores the facets of his one-sexed culture with skill and insight. Once the situation is stated, the rest of the book is given over to wild and woolly slambang stuff in the familiar Anderson manner; if you like swordplay, sea-battles, and deeds of derring-do, you'll have no complaints here.

The chief plot-problem of Anderson's rather nondescript hero seems to be how to stay out of bed with the locals; it makes for some

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the great mutation

by Talmage Powell

"In the dumb animal kingdom," Dr. Hofstetter told his sweating patient, "this would be one of those limitless and endless evolutionary trials that end in error. However, I think we can see you through . . ."

DR. HANS HOFSTETTER later compared the event to the moment the first man was born without a tail.

The doctor's day had been routine, consumed mainly with financially-responsible ladies who whiled away their idle time with the hobby hypochondria. The last patient before the doctor knocked off for lunch was a man.

The doctor looked at the newcomer with some surprise. The man was almost a physical giant, with a face that looked as if it had been trimmed by meat-choppers. He exuded brute force and vitality; his eyes were black, alert little marbles tucked under craggy brows of scar tissue.

Dr. Hofstetter had never had a more rugged physical specimen walk into his office.

"Doc," the new patient said in gutteral tones out of the side of his mouth, "I got a pain."

"I see," said the doctor. He was a big, square Germanic specimen himself, but he was dwarfed by the newcomer as

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he stood up and offered the patient a chair. "And where is the pain located?"

"Right here," the patient said, patting the lower part of his stomach.

"Has it been bothering you long?"

"Couple, three weeks. There's a swelling, too."

"Well, we'll certainly have a look. Now, your name, please."

"Gino Alberghetti."

"Occupation?"

"Prize fighter."

"Age?"

"Twenty seven."

THE DOCTOR noted the information on a card. "Just step in the next room and strip to your shorts, and we'll get the examination underway."

While the patient readied himself, Dr. Hofstetter washed his hands. He walked into the examination room and in his comforting fashion smiled at Mr. Alberghetti as he picked up his stethoscope.

The patient's pulse, blood pressure, and heartbeat were perfect. The muscle tone was excellent. Superficially, the man seemed in the best of health.

The doctor's square, blunt fingers expertly explored the area where the alleged pain was located. Alberghetti grunted. "That's it, doc. Right there. Ain't a natural sort of pain. I mean—it don't hurt like pain ought to hurt. Get what I mean?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, like a little pressure. A feeling that something is there."

"I see. An awareness."

"Yeah, you got it, doc."

THE DOCTOR let his face become a mask as his fingers detected the slight growth back of the abdomen wall. Rather unusual spot for a tumor in a man. Still and all...

"Well, doc?" Mr. Alberghetti said as the doctor stepped back from him.

"Oh, I think we have everything under control, but there's nothing like being thorough."

"You mean I got something bad?" Mr. Alberghetti, for all his courage when facing an op-

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ponent he could sock back, expressed a quick terror that something might be haywire inside of him.

"Let's not jump to conclusions," Dr. Hofstetter said. "This way please."

He stood the man behind the fluoroscope, adjusted the instrument, and stared dumbfounded.

It is impossible, of course, the doctor thought. *I've been working too hard.*

He closed his eyes.

Opened them.

The faintly-outlined, but unmistakable shadows were still there in the man's innards.

"Am I gonna die, doc?"

The forlorn wail brought Dr. Hofstetter out of his trance. "I think not," he assured the patient. "Excuse me a moment. You can step from there now, if you please."

The doctor darted into the next office, closed the door to give him privacy, wiped his face with a handkerchief, and reached for a phone.

IN LESS than an hour, four of Dr. Hofstetter's colleagues descended on the office. Mr. Alberghetti blanched at the sight of them. He grabbed Dr. Hofstetter's hand. "Doc," he gravelled, "tell me the worst. I can take it."

"Everything's going to be fine," was the best Hofstetter could offer him.

Mr. Alberghetti sat as if stricken with paralysis as the quintet of doctors probed and peered at him for over an hour. They took a blood sample, which they rushed out; they took x-rays which were treated with equal dispatch.

Mr. Alberghetti sat and shivered, with a couple of juicy tears in his eyes.

The ordeal continued until the day was gone. Nobody had eaten lunch. Time after time, the five doctors huddled to whisper. Alternate heads would pop out of the huddle to survey Mr. Alberghetti.

Finally the four doctors left the office, reeling like men drunk with excitement and consternation.

MR. ALBERGHETTI took a deep, wavering breath and said, "Tell my dear old mom I took it like a man, will you, doc? Tell her before I

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died I thought about her."

"I don't think you're going to die," Dr. Hofstetter said.

"Honest?"

"I wouldn't delude you."

"Then what's the matter with me?"

"A most unusual thing."

"Yeah, doc?"

"You're going to have a baby."

"Me? I ain't even married —unless that Mamie..."

"I didn't say Mamie, Mr. Alberghetti. I said, *you*. It seems you are pregnant."

"Damn you, doc, take them glasses off and I'll..."

"Just relax, Mr. Alberghetti. Striking me would in no wise alter the facts. Anyway, I don't think you want to strike me. I think that you, like many men, are much more tender in your emotional recesses that you'd like to have show on the surface."

Mr. Alberghetti squinted. He struggled with thought. He made a decision. "You're nuts."

"*I* thought so, too. But the unalterable fact remains that in the lower portions of your body a sac-like growth has come into being. At its apex is a canal connecting with an equally strange growth that must be some form of egg-producing mechanism. Means of fertilization are already present in your anatomy, and with the set-up ready, a perfectly natural and logical event has taken place. The sac now contains the fetus that will prove to be your first son or daughter."

"WELL, I'll be damned," Mr. Alberghetti said, gingerly touching his lower stomach. "What'll the boys around Stillman's gym have to say about this?" He sat oppalled. Then he leaped to his feet. "I don't wanna have no baby, doc!" he wailed in a bullfrog basso.

"Yes," said the doctor, "I suspect it *is* going to be most trying. While a capricious mutation has enabled you to conceive, no provision has been made for the actual event. In the dumb animal kingdom, this would be one of those limitless and endless evolutionary trials that ends in error. However, I think we can see you through. It will be no trouble to have the finest experts on

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earth take part in the Caesarian."

"I don't care about that," Mr. Alberghetti moaned. "I just don't want to have no baby."

"So don't a lot of women," Dr. Hofstetter sighed. "But it's the one task they haven't been able to figure their way out of completely. See me next Friday at 2 p. m."

Mr. Alberghetti wept his way out of the office and Dr. Hofstetter realized, with a start, that he was late for a dinner engagement with his closest friend, Dr. David Stein.

THE STEINS and Hofstetters were attractive, congenial, cultured people. Mrs. Stein was blonde, Mrs. Hofstetter brunette. Both were beautiful, well-groomed, and possessed charm. Dr. Stein was dark and handsome, keen-eyed, quick of movement. He and Dr. Hofstetter had graduated in the same class from Duke University Medical School and interned in the same New York hospital.

Dinner over, Dr. Hofstetter drew Dr. Stein into his study. "Something's troubling you, Dave," he said, offering cigars.

Dr. Stein's glance flashed to his friend. "You know me too well," he smiled.

"Perhaps I could be of help."

"I don't know. I had a most unusual patient today. A man. He..." Dr. Stein halted. He clipped the end of his cigar, lighted it.

"Wasn't pregnant, was he?" Dr. Hofstetter smiled.

Dr. Stein choked on cigar smoke. "How did you know?"

"Was he really?"

"He most certainly was. I could hardly believe my senses."

"Neither could I."

THE TWO men stared at each other.

Dr. Stein said, "I thought mine was an isolated phenonemon!"

"So did I."

"Great shades of Darwin," Dr. Stein said, sinking toward a chair. "Two in the same day."

"The condition may not be

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general," Dr. Hofstetter said. "Remember that it's a big, big city with millions of men."

"How do you explain it?"

"I don't, yet," Dr. Hofstetter said. "How do you?"

"I'm equally in the dark. But one thing is certain: We have to keep this thing quiet until we've looked into it further."

"Yes, I've thought of that."

"Not only for the sake of these two men," Dr. Stein said, "but for the sake of the structure of society itself. If we break the news prematurely that men are subject to pregnancy, if we can offer no explanation, come forth with no assurances, I hate to think of the psychological chaos."

"I'm shuddering with you, Dave."

Dr. Stein looked up at his friend. "Hans, you're an officer of the association. I think a quiet meeting of our directorship is in order."

"I quite agree."

"Meanwhile we caution our patients that not a word of this leaks out."

"I think the men involved will agree to that quickly enough."

DR. HOFSTETTER spent the remainder of the night making phone calls. The next day, the directors began quietly filtering into the city, and Dr. Hofstetter convened the meeting in a suite in the Waldorf.

The best medical brains in the country took up the questions posed by Dr. Hofstetter.

How general was the condition?

What was its cause?

Was it confined to the United States?

What will the Russians have to say about it?

How are we going to break it to the public?

And how in the hell are we going to tell our wives?

Under Dr. Hofstetter's guidance, committees were set up in every field of medicine to study and explain the new turn in human events. Dr. David Stein headed up the committee on public relations. It would be his difficult task to break the news in the best couched terms when an explanation was forthcoming.

"Gentlemen," Dr. Hofstetter concluded the first meeting, "there is no need for my

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pointing out the direness of this emergency. We have little time, at best. An event of this nature cannot be hidden long, and we cannot afford to let the tabloids in their fashion make the first public announcement. I shall be available twenty four hours a day to all members of the committees appointed here today."

Dr. Hofstetter retired to his office and informed his wife by phone that he would not be home for a few days. He awaited reports.

THE FIRST came at four a. m. the next day. It was from Rudeen, an Alabama surgeon.

Dr. Hofstetter's eyes burned over the report. The condition was general: No less than fourteen cases had turned up the very day the directors of the association were in session. One more case in New York. Two in Chicago, one in Indio, California, one in Augusta, Georgia—where the gentleman threatened to shoot the doctor as a tool of a Red front organization—one in Mexico City, two in Montreal, and six in Paris, France.

Dr. Hofstetter laid the report aside. Fourteen. There probably were hundreds of cases. All over the world. Rudeen had simply made a rapid spot check to get an indicator of the generality of the condition.

Within thirty six hours Colmeyer's report was ready.

HOFSTETTER gave himself an injection of vitamins and gulped black coffee. Then he concentrated on the report.

"All evolutionary history," Colmeyer had written, "plainly indicates the effort of nature to maintain a balance, to try new methods and processes with the aim of achieving greater efficiency and harmony of creatures to their environment, and to eliminate or modify creatures which have decreased in efficiency.

"The present phenonemon can best be understood by pointing out that divers methods of reproduction have been in use on this planet for untold ages. We need only to mention the pollination of flowers, the sexual habits and attributes of the oyster, the

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practice among certain species for the female to leave the setting of eggs to the male, to understand that the mammalian mode of reproduction represents only a small part of the picture. It was only with the appearance of mammals—in recent times, historically speaking—that the method was introduced where the young were carried, born helpless, and suckled and guarded for a comparatively inordinately long span of time.

"The mammalian mode represented a great improvement in that it enabled the conception and development of the young with a potential lacking in the lower forms.

"From all available knowledge, this committee goes on record with the theory that this latest development in the method of reproduction is an attempt by nature to experiment further and improve the method.

"WE FEEL that the attempt has been hastened, perhaps even brought into being, by the human race itself. The process has been centuries upon centuries in the working, from the dawn of civilization. When the first man built the first house to shelter his female while he went forth to conquer the rigors of his world, he began the process. During the last few hundred years the process of taking away the usefulness of women has been going forward at an ever-accelerating pace. Now we have reached the time of crisis. Men have attempted to do everything, from the purchasing of professional laundrying to the baking of cakes, which they whip up from a bake shop over the hot coin earned on a competitive job. Every conceivable device for saving labor and entertaining the female of the species has become a major end product of a seething, rushing, competitive civilization.

"Thus the female has been reduced to the point where she need only possess the strength to push a vacuum cleaner on ball-bearing casters. Physiologically, her mode of living and gradual mis-use have resulted, over the centuries, in modifications of body structure that make her once "nat-

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ural" method of giving birth a thing now almost unheard-of except among the so-called primitive peoples.

"What we are witnessing today is not a sudden nor spontaneous thing. It is the result of the accumulation of forces an alert nature always brings to bear when anything in her domain reveals a threat to get out of balance.

"What the future holds, we can only guess. If the dis-use of the female continues at its present pace, the new reproductive mode might well become permanent. On the other hand, the new mode might prove to be an abortive attempt by nature to correct a balance."

HOFSTETTER laid the report down and paced his office. He needed a conference with Dave Stein, but it would simply have to wait. He had been thirty six hours without sleep. He all but fell on the leather couch in his office, but sleep didn't come immediately. He was unable to get the gist of the report from his mind, and he was haunted by thoughts of his wife who faced only the task of devising ways to fill her time, once the prepackaged food was prepared with devices that did the cooking at a flick of the switch.

Hofstetter was awakened by Dave Stein's hand shaking his shoulder.

He knew by Dave's action and attitude that something important had come up.

"There's coffee and sandwiches on your desk, Hans," Dave said. "The Russians announced this morning they were making a public announcement concerning the future of the race."

Dr. Hofstetter rose from the couch groggily as Dr. Stein turned on the small television set in the corner of the office.

THE FACE of a network news announcer filled the screen. He intoned in a weighty voice:

"As promised, the Russians have come forth with their announcement. For once, their words, if true, should reach the hearing of every man, woman, and child in the free world."

Dr. Hofstetter munched on

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ham and cheese and sipped coffee and felt a dread of what was coming.

"I'll read you the communique as it came from Moscow," the announcer said.

He picked up a paper, donned heavy black-rimmed glasses, glanced once up into the very eyes of his listeners, and returned his attention to the paper.

"The Russian institute of advanced medicine today announced the most amazing discovery of all time. Russian science has found a method whereby the glorious women of the world will be spared the rigors of childbirth. While the western warmongers were pouring millions of their blood-stained dollars into the science of war-making, the dedicated doctors of the USSR fought for and achieved another great victory in their battle to make life better for all people. As another example of the blessings of the only true ideology..."

Dr. Hofstetter choked on his ham and cheese. "They're making the whole thing out to their credit!"

"We could have expected nothing else," Dr. Stein said.

"So they've beaten us to the punch. But the truth will come out."

"Still, they've made an impression. Some of it's bound to linger in certain places in the world."

DR. HOFSTETTER headed a delegation to Washington, explained the scientific facts of the matter at the White House, and saw a sane and honest American announcement made.

Before he left Washington, a second Russian announcement shattered the world.

Straslinski, survivor of the last cloak-and-dagger bit in Russian and hence the top man, was with child. The great and noble father and protector of followers of the true ideology everywhere was himself setting an example to all men. Here was proof of his benevolence and the manner in which he cherished the future of the race.

Dr. Hofstetter received a note from high echelon requesting him to remain in

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Washington until it was determined what the Russians would do next.

His frantic wife phoned him, "Hans, are you..."

"No, not yet."

"New York is a madhouse. The jokes that are going the rounds!"

"It's the same down here."

"And yet there's something else, Hans...a feeling...in the face of this great change, people are not as hostile as before."

"I know. Take care of yourself."

"I will—and Hans, if you should...I mean..."

"I'll call you," he said gently. He was touched by her concern and desire to be useful if he should join the ranks of pregnant men.

He chaffed at the delay in Washington. He called his office daily. Dave Stein was taking care of his patients, but the parade of women with the hobby hypchondria seemed to have thinned considerably.

TO FILL his time, Dr. Hofstetter read all the news he could absorb. A quickly-thrown-together play, "Virginal Papa", had opened in New York and sold out for two years. In Baltimore's night court a cab driver was given ninety days for slugging a pregnant man. The usual sentence was a fine and court costs, all circumstances—except that one—being the same.

In Sing-Sing's death row, a stay of execution was granted when doctors pronounced an occupant with child.

In South Carolina, the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan announced that he was dissolving his organization to retire to his farm and await his child.

A Paraguayan rebel leader's efforts came to naught when three of his key men returned to their homes to have babies.

In Santa Fe a man walked into police headquarters and confessed to a murder three years past. "I couldn't kill anybody now," the man told reporters. "You never heard of pregnant women going around murdering people, did you? Well, I guess I can understand why now. I ain't just a big lug, you know."

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THE RUSSIAN foreign minister announced that his doctor had predicted twins for him. He suggested that people in the satellite countries might keep a little more of their grain and milk this harvest. Washington held its breath, but the man's head remained on his shoulders and Straslinski said he backed his foreign minister to the hilt. In fact, Straslinski said, we'd like to see all children of the world—well-fed, even if their beliefs are in error, and perhaps we could open our grain stores a bit.

Dr. Hofstetter finally realized he'd got lost in the shuffle. Nobody would miss him. So he took a train and went back to New York.

Dr. Stein met his train. "How's Washington?"

"Thing's are changing. We might even look forward to an honest and genuine disarmament conference this spring. The world has never been so close to a real and lasting peace."

The two started through the throngs toward the street.

"The latest reports here," Dr. Stein said, "show a levelling off in pregnancies. The mutation might have been a side door, a blind alley, after all. But the people of the world will be a long time knowing that. The existing nature of things has nearly cracked wide open and it'll remake the psychological outlook of the entire race. Women will seek usefulness. Men will find a new consideration for themselves and others. I think we can look forward to a new era in human relations, to say the least."

Suddenly Dr. Hofstetter stopped.

"What is it?" Dr. Stein asked with quick concern.

"I," said Dr. Hofstetter, blanching and touching his stomach, "just had the most avid desire for a plate of dill pickles—with a side dish of chocolate cream pie..."

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a little knowledge

by Charles V. De Vet

...can be downright deadly when you're on an unknown world. But the question here was — deadly to whom?

THE SECOND day on the planet we made contact with one group of natives—the race the survey team had named the "Pinks."

Several times, as we sat and followed the shade around the space ship, we had gotten glimpses of pink-orange bodies through the pineapple-top trees; and late in the afternoon an old female, followed by two male children, came out into the clearing and stood watching us cautiously.

"Sit still," Pastor Gorman said softly. "Any movement might frighten them."

After a few minutes the Pinks edged closer to the pile of wild yams we had placed between us and the woods, and we were able to observe them better.

The old female must have stood over seven feet tall. Her body was covered with orange-streaked pink hair that was straggly and patchy. Her hide reminded me of a moth-eaten rug. Her small round head and long arms were entirely free of hair. She held her hulky shoulders hunched up around her neck and pendulous u d d e r s,

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starting low on her breast, hung down to her waist.

The children were covered with a film of dust, that had caked in oily spots of moisture. Evidently they had been perspiring heavily after rolling in dirt. None of them wore clothing.

A soft breeze brought the heavy odor of rancid bodies. "I can smell them from here," I said.

Gorman gave me a frown of disapproval. "They're a primitive race," he said. "Naturally they won't be as sanitary as we are."

THE THREE Pinks squatted down beside the pile of yams and began to eat, tearing off the tough casings of the vegetables with their teeth and spitting them on the ground. After they'd eaten their fill of the yams, they gathered the remainder in their arms and moved quickly away from us. Several dozen other Pinks, who had come out of the woods while they ate, met them and snatched at the yams. There was a brief, snarling, teeth-snapping scrabble, and our late visitors lost the bulk of their spoil.

Pastor Gorman was quite pleased. "A successful beginning," he said, pulling himself to his feet. "We've shown them we mean no harm. Soon we should be able to prove that we're their friends. Then our work can begin."

Actually it was his work that would begin. I was only Johnny Zarwell, the pilot and owner of the space ship. I had contracted to bring him out here, to spend a year with him on this newly-discovered world, and bring him back again. The missionary work would be all his.

Gorman was an old man, well into his seventies. After a lifetime of secular work, and realizing that he was approaching the end of his productive years, he had decided to add a last, dramatic, effort to his career. Something that would add weight and significance to his life. Without actually stating it as such, even to himself I believe, he probably saw himself as the Saint Patrick of this world. He would bring the word of God to the savages—h u m a n o i d—that had been

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found here; he would be the first, and would be remembered in their history. I suppose that could be called vanity, but I'm certain it was not a deliberate vanity, and it was a noble one. He was prepared to give everything—including his life if necessary—to teach them of the true God. Pastor Gorman was as thoroughly a *good* man as I have ever known.

His church, a rather recent sect who called themselves the Repentants, had furnished the money to hire my ship, and I had flown him to this new world.

THE NEXT day Pastor Gorman and I spent the early hours of the morning digging up wild yams in the forest. He went unarmed, but I carried an electric pistol at my waist; I had no intention of dying a martyr's death, if I could help it.

When we'd gathered a couple pecks of yams we carried them to the center of the clearing, and withdrew to the ship. Soon a young Pink, then a flood of others, left the woods and descended on the waiting meal. Each Pink grabbed as many yams as he could get to and ran off to eat them. Within a half minute the yams had all vanished.

An old female—probably the same one that had visited us the day before—stayed behind. She had been too slow to get any of the yams and now evidently was hoping we had more.

Pastor Gorman saw this as his opportunity. He took two steps toward her, and as she g a t h e r e d herself for flight he spoke quietly. "We are friends." We had both learned their simple language from the tapes the s u r v e y team had made.

The old female said nothing, but stood watching him warily.

"We will not hurt you," Gorman tried again.

"Hungry," the old female said.

"We will feed you," Gorman assured her.

"Big hungry," she said, accenting the adverb.

"Wait in that place." Pastor Gorman went into the ship and came out with a loaf of bread and a tin of canned beef. He

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opened the can and started toward the female.

She retreated, keeping approximately ten yards distance between them. Pastor Gorman placed the can and the loaf of bread on the ground and returned to where I stood.

THE FEMALE approached the food, sniffing, and with drops of saliva dripping from the corners of her mouth. She snatched up the loaf and bit off large chunks and swallowed them greedily. When she finished she took up the can of beef and sniffed at it. She turned it around in her hands several times, spilling the meat to the ground. Disregarding the dropped food she continued to examine the can until she lost interest and tossed it aside.

"I made a mistake," Pastor Gorman whispered to me. "I just remembered that they're vegetarians."

"Hungry," the old female whined.

"Come with another sun," Gorman said, moving one arm around in a circle.

"Hungry," the female repeated.

Pastor Gorman shook his head and held his hands out to show that they were empty.

The female made a disgruntled noise in her throat and left us.

Gorman smiled with satisfaction. "I think we've made out first friend," he said. "She will bring the others to us."

WE SAW THE planet's other humanoid race the next day.

The Pinks had eaten the food we had dug in the early morning, and were circling around us, never coming within reach, but seeming to have lost their earlier fear. Pastor Gorman spoke to several of them, but they shied off, too timid to speak.

Suddenly the Pinks scattered, uttering bleating cries as they disappeared into the woods. It took us a minute to locate the cause of their alarm: Two brown-skinned humanoids at the far edge of the clearing.

They stood regarding us, evidently very puzzled. After a minute they began moving slowly toward us, cautiously but without apparent fear. Their skin was a light brown

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color, with a purple cast, and as far as we could see, hairless. They were spindly-limbed, with big stomachs, yet they moved with a wiry agility. Their lower cuspid teeth grew up over their lips and gave them a ferocious appearance. This, I suppose, was the reason the survey crew had named them the "Uglies." They wore hide cloaks that covered their backs and sides and were knotted across their chests. Each had a stone knife tied in the knotted cord on his chest, and each held a long, stone-tipped spear.

As they came near they raised their weapons slightly, and I brought my hand cautiously up to my pistol butt. I wore the pistol always when I was outside.

"WHATEVER you do, don't shoot one of them," Gorman cautioned. "That would be disastrous."

"If they make a move to throw those spears I'm going to defend myself," I gritted lowly.

"Don't. Please," he pleaded. "We can run inside if they prove hostile." He edged over to the open port of the space ship and I followed.

"Pale babies," one of the tanned savages said unexpectedly.

I saw Pastor Gorman's eyebrows raise and his face work slightly as he sought the meaning of the words. The Uglies' language was a bit more complicated than that of the Pinks, but we had had no trouble learning it.

"We friends," Gorman called to the savages.

They disregarded him and muttered in a soft guttural back and forth, too rapidly for us to understand what they said.

"We come in peace," Gorman spoke slowly, distinctly. In an aside to me he said, "They're supposed to be more intelligent than the Pinks."

At that moment one of the savages pointed urgently to where a bolder Pink had shown himself at the edge of the woods and both bounded off in pursuit. I breathed a sigh of released tension.

WE SAW THE Uglies several times the next day. However, they paid no atten-

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tion to us, but each time disappeared chasing the fleeing Pinks.

In the afternoon I decided to go hunting. Both of us would welcome a meal of fresh meat. I took along a compass and was careful not to go too far from the ship. I was unable to scare up even one animal. Twice I thought I had, but both times what I thought were animals turned out to be only large native insects, and not edible.

I returned to the ship just in time to see a party of three Uglies chasing a female Pink—by her markings I recognized her as our visitor of the second day on the planet—across the clearing. As I watched, the Pink disappeared over a ridge, closely followed by the brown savages. Thirty or so yards behind them ran Pastor Gorman. He was shouting, "Stop that! Stop that! Let her alone!"

I ran across the clearing at an angle that would intersect his path. He stopped, gasping for breath, as I came up to him. We both looked down into the shallow gorge below us. The Pink female was lying on her stomach, with a long spear sticking out through her back.

Gorman was too winded, and I too shocked by what I saw, to move as an Uglie turned the female over on her side, pushed her head back, and slashed open her throat with his knife. Her limbs still jerked feebly as he slit her stomach and disembowled her.

IT WAS ALL over in a brief minute. Two of the Uglies boosted the body of the female onto the shoulder of the largest and they carried her up and over the hill on the far side of the gorge.

I heard Pastor Gorman being sick beside me as I turned away. I was not feeling at all well myself.

I had to give the old boy credit—he had nerve. His face still hadn't regained its natural color a few minutes later as he said resolutely, "I'm going after them."

"Good Lord, they'll kill you, too," I protested.

He gently but firmly took my hand from his arm. "That killing cannot be permitted to continue," he said. He paused. "If I accomplish nothing else

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while I'm here, I've got to stop that."

I saw that it would do no good to try to dissuade him. "Take a gun then," I said. I offered him my pistol.

He shook his head.

I did get him to take my compass, and the lunch I had packed for my hunting trip, but that was all. I never expected to see him alive again.

HE RETURNED shortly before dusk that same day. But he would not talk. He was a sick man—mentally sick. He prayed late into the night, and once toward daylight when I woke I heard him muttering to himself. I doubt that he slept at all that night.

In the morning he was more calm. He would eat nothing—took only a cup of coffee—but he talked quite freely.

"They're cannibals, Johnny," he said. "They eat those poor Pinks."

I had suspected as much, but I said nothing: I knew he would go on. "I tried to reason with them," he resumed, "but it did no good. They answered my questions, but wouldn't argue. Their attitude seemed to be that what I talked about was too absurd even to discuss. I got nowhere." He bowed his head.

"I was afraid they'd kill you," I said, trying to take his mind from his grief.

He put down his cup of coffee. "That's a funny thing," he commented. "I was almost certain they would, too—but they weren't the slightest bit hostile. After awhile, I think I figured out the reason why. Their young are white until about a third grown, I found, and I have a theory they thought I was one of them; one who had never lost his youthful whiteness. I suppose that must happen sometimes. Probably about as often as an albino human." His thoughts returned to his earlier distress. "We've got to convince them to stop that slaughter, Johnny," he said.

"Maybe this is a season when their natural game is scarce," I tried again to console him. "I didn't see a sign of an animal in the woods yesterday. Maybe they killed and ate the Pink only because they were starving."

I had said the wrong thing.

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Pastor Gorman rose abruptly and paced the room several times before he was able to resume our conversation. Finally he stopped and rested both palms on the eating board. "I saw the bodies of a dozen Pinks, Johnny," he choked out. "They were hanging from tree limbs—like the carcasses of animals."

SOMETIME during the next night, Pastor Gorman decided that his immediate work must still be with the Pinks. "The Uglies' chieftain gave me his word they would not hunt near the ship," he said. "That was the most I could get him to agree to. But at least we can continue our work."

I'm afraid that for the next several weeks his work was not very rewarding. The Pinks soon lost all fear of us, but that created other, more serious problems. The worst nuisance, probably, was their curiosity and acquisitiveness. They would steal tools, or any other articles we were unwise enough to leave where they could be found. Most of what they took was useless to them.

One curious female touched Gorman's shirt, and when he made no protest, continued the inspection of the remainder of his garments, becoming more bold all the time. Soon a dozen others joined in the game of pulling at his clothing.

My own attention was taken by several Pinks who began tugging at my clothing in the same game. I brushed them urgently aside, but they came gleefully back, and the adults proved stronger than I. Drawing my sidearm, and squeezing its grip to half charge, I set them back on their rumps.

I turned to see how Gorman was making out. The Pinks had him on the ground beside the ship, and were tearing the last of the clothes from his body. They were jabbering excitedly and giving out with a kind of chirping laugh. I sprayed the gun's charge across them and they fell in a half circle around him.

He climbed slowly to his feet and limped past me. He'd had a rough few minutes. "Thanks, Johnny," he mumbled as he went by.

WHEN HE came out of the ship he still did not wear

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a gun, but he made no protest when I gave a taste of the shock to any Pinks who came too near either of us the rest of the day. By evening we were left strictly alone. I found myself able to work up little fondness for the Pinks.

During the following days, Pastor Gorman tried often to talk to them about his God, but with no more result than if he had been preaching to a colony of baboons. It was impossible to carry on any semblance of a constructive conversation with them. "Maybe they just aren't intelligent enough to understand what you're trying to tell them," I suggested once. "They remind me more of animals than people."

"The linguists, who studied the tapes the survey crew made, estimated their intelligence at about 60 percentile—on the human scale, that is," he replied. "They're definitely not animals."

"I've often wondered," I said. "Just where do you draw the line? When are they classed as animals, and when as an intelligent species? In other words, when do you decide they have souls to be saved?"

"There's been a great deal of theological debate on that question," Gorman answered thoughtfully, "but mostly we're inclined to agree with the civilian authorities in their standard of rating a planet's races. If they have a language, they're intelligent—and to us they have souls."

THE PINKS soon spoiled our yam digging. When we came out in the mornings they were always waiting. They would follow us into the forest and grab the yams as soon as we dug them up, most of the time impeding our work as they fought for the food. I lost my enthusiasm for the digging then. The yams were quite easily found, and easily dug. The Pinks could dig their own, and did, when hungry enough. The fact was, they were too lazy to do it for themselves, unless they had no other choice. And there was little point to our efforts, as I saw it. We had as much of their friendship as they had to give, and they would never stay still long enough for Pastor Gorman

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to tell them about his God. Soon he, too, began to wonder if it were not a forlorn task.

We had noticed early that all the adults we saw were females, while the young were all males, but this did not puzzle us long. Soon after Gorman returned from the Uglies' village, we passed a young male as he wrapped his arms around a female and playfully pulled her to the ground. Gorman stopped to watch them with a smile. "Affectionate little fellow, isn't he?" he remarked.

Abruptly he turned aside, his face reddening slowly with embarrassment. The young male's affection had proven to be more mature than Pastor Gorman had anticipated.

It did help solve the puzzle for us however. The Pinks, we learned, were born male, and remained so until shortly after puberty period. They than underwent a biological transformation and became females. We could readily single out many older children whose male accouterments were in the evident process of atrophy, and whose female contours were beginning to emerge.

THE PINKS seemed to understand that they were safe from the Uglies when they were in our clearing and it was cluttered with them every day. Their droppings, and natural fetid odor, made the place smell like a particularly odiferous stable.

The pregnant females took to giving birth to their young beneath the trees at the edge of the clearing. There were always six to a litter—never more and never less—and the young were on their own from a few weeks after birth. Their mothers gave them little care.

They were born small, hardly more than six inches long. A moment after birth they would raise themselves on their hands and feet, shake their small wet bodies, and crawl on all fours over the prostrate body of their parent, struggling with other newborn for a place at the pendulous udders. A month later they could be found nibbling at the bark of small trees. Judging by the observed number of pregnant females, they probably bred several times a year.

The young added to the clutter of the clearing, and to

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our problems. They seemed to love to scamper about the feet of their older kin, and had no more sense of keeping clear of a walking adult than an Earth cat. Often they were stepped on, frequently with fatal results. Every day I had to carry small bodies into the woods and bury them. If I had not, the additional stench would have driven us away.

After a month of fruitless effort Pastor Gorman gave up trying to teach his religion to the Pinks. "We'll have to help them advance culturally," he said. He tried, by example, to induce them to cultivate a plot of land, and to plant it with yams.

The Pinks only ate his seed.

By the third month, he was thoroughly discouraged. "Perhaps we'd better see what we can do with the Uglies," he said. "If we can convert them, we will at least be able to save the lives of many Pinks. That way we will give something to both races."

I decided to go along with him this time. He was impractical, but kind old fellow, and I had developed a deep affection for him. We packed a tent, provisions for a month—I took along a spare pistol and ammunition—and set out for the Uglie village.

THE UGLIES did not welcome us, but neither did they interfere as we set up our tent near their village and unpacked our provisions. For several hours a crowd of them watched, but when we did nothing unusual they wandered back to their village.

The Uglie village was on the banks of a deep, muddy river. The huts were primitive reed structures, built around a wooden framework, but they were surprisingly clean.

We stayed until our provisions ran out. Each day Pastor Gorman went into the village and waited in a square near the center until he had a chance to talk with any Uglies passing by. At first he talked about anything that might seem to be of interest to them, gradually leading the conversations around to his God. The Uglies, in their restrained way, were a courteous people, and always listened to him. Especially in the evenings. Often most of the population would gather in

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the square to listen to his preachings. And he did what I thought was a very good job. But whether or not he made any real progress I could not tell.

"How intelligent are they?" I asked him one night as we lay in our sleeping bags.

"The linguists figured about 80 percentile." He was tired, and beginning to grow discouraged again.

"That should be intelligent enough. Do you think they understand what you're telling them?"

"I'M QUITE certain they do," he answered listlessly, "but I'm afraid words aren't very convincing to them. If only I had a way to give them some kind of practical demonstration. But of course I can't expect God to perform a miracle for me. I'll just have to do the best I can."

"I notice they won't discuss your teachings with you," I said. "I wonder why not."

He shrugged. "That I don't understand either. Probably some tribal mores. I suppose it would take years to really understand any alien culture, even one as primitive as this. But it's very frustrating."

He rolled over on his side to face me. "This may sound vain, Johnny, but I'm certain they respect me—perhaps even like me. A few discussed their own rudimentary religion with me. It seems they have a vague kind of pantheism: Every object—every tree, rock, and insect—has its individual god. The gods have a definite order of greatness—what that order is I haven't bothered to learn. But theirs isn't a fanatical belief; they take it quite casually. I'm certain I could convert them if I could only think of the proper method." He returned to the problem that was always close behind his desire to convert the Uglies. "I've got to stop that killing of the Pinks, Johnny."

PASTOR GORMAN had his work to keep him occupied, but I was at loose ends. I was becoming more bored every day. I still had no luck hunting, and as a last resort I took to wandering among the Uglies, observing the way they lived, and talking to them—

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about anything, just to be occupied.

They led lives much like the tribes of old Africa, with a family life, affection between children and parents, and respect for community laws and mores.

The purple shading of their light tan complexions, that we had noticed earlier, was caused by the blood that coursed just beneath the surface of their translucent skin. When one observed closely enough the veins could be readily traced. The hide cloaks they wore were made of the cured skins of Pinks.

Gorman avoided them during their meal preparations, but I had less reluctance. I found that they tied the carcasses of the slain Pinks to short vine-ropes and let them float in the river for several days before cooking. Perhaps to remove the salt. The carcasses were then placed in prepared clay pits, a square-cornered species of leaf was stuffed into the stomach cavities and more clay packed around the outside. Fire was built around the crypts and the meat baked. At first they offered portions to me, but of course I refused. Every day the hunters brought in more dead Pinks. Whenever Gorman happened to see them he suffered renewed agonies of grief.

Near the end of our month in the village I learned something that startled me, though I might have guessed it earlier: They believed that Gorman—and probably I also—was mad!

I had read that primitive tribes often have a peculiar respect for their madman, usually believing them to be inhabited by spirits. That probably was the biggest reason we still remained unharmed.

WE RETURNED to the ship when our supplies ran out. We spent two days and two nights there. Pastor Gorman seemed to be having a mighty inward struggle. By the third morning, he had come to a decision. He explained it to me as we packed more provisions.

"If I were at all wise, I'd be able to convert at least one of those races," he said, "but I'm afraid it's a task bigger than I'm capable of handling, Johnny. Oh, I'm going to keep try-

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ing," he went on as he saw that I intended to protest, "but to be honest, I doubt that I will ever be successful.

"So I've decided to give the Pinks a means of defending themselves. The decision was not easy. I'm not even certain that what I intend doing is God's way, but I can only do what I think best. I'm going to teach the Pinks to use the bow and arrow. With that weapon they can defend themselves against the Uglies' spears and knives. If it works the way I hope, each side will learn respect for the weapons of the other, and the killings will stop."

Something about his decision disquieted me, but I couldn't place exactly what it was. I thought for several minutes before I said, "I can't give you a reason, but I don't think you're doing the right thing. Maybe it's because I've come to admire the Uglies, while I despise the Pinks. The Uglies have more of the traits we have always thought of as desireable in a race. Such as family integrity, tolerance and respect for the rights of others, and honor. While the Pinks are shiftless and selfish, with none of the better traits, as far as I can see. It doesn't seem right that you should help them against the Uglies."

"I UNDERSTAND how you feel, Johnny," Pastor Gorman answered. "But don't you see, what you admire in the Uglies—and what the Pinks lack—is only the result of a greater intelligence and higher cultural development? That greater advance cannot be allowed to compensate for their murder of the Pinks. Surely you understand that."

"I don't know." I could think of no valid argument, but I still felt he was making a wrong decision.

"This I am sure of," Gorman said earnestly, "if I'm to follow God's way, I must do everything I can to stop that killing!"

TO GIVE him credit, Pastor Gorman intended to be as fair as he possibly could. He was going to return to the Uglie village and tell them what he intended to do. Theirs would be the choice then: They could cease their killing of the

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Pinks, or accept the consequences. I went with him again, but this time I doubted my own sanity. We were asking to be killed. But I had developed too deep an affection for the old man to let him go alone.

That evening Gorman took up his usual stance in the village square. However, he had traversed the huts during all the afternoon, telling the natives that his talk that evening would be of special importance, and asking them to attend.

Most of the villagers were there. Gorman talked again of his God, building up to the explanation that killing was the worst offense that could be committed against Him. He explained how, as His servant, he must do all he could to prevent murder. Once again he asked them to cease their wanton slaughter. Finally he warned that if they would not, he would give the Pinks weapons with which to fight back.

I think the Uglies understood the importance of what he told them; I think, also, that they believed he might have the power to do what he threatened. There was a long period of subdued but serious conversation. The Uglies wandered about, forming and reforming groups for discussion. But the end was discouraging for Gorman. They returned to their huts without a word to him.

The next day, when a hunting party brought in the bodies of a female and a child Pink, we left them. "They have made their choice," Pastor Gorman said fatalistically.

IT TOOK him more than another month to teach the Pinks the use of the bow and arrow. Yet they were surprisingly eager to learn, and as surprisingly adept. I had doubted that they had the intelligence or the perseverance to acquire the necessary skill, but they listened quite attentively, and followed Pastor Gorman's instructions fairly well. They did not, I am certain, understand at all the reason it was being taught them, but accepted it more as a game. I may have been prejudiced, but my view was that to them it presented only another means to practice their

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continual mischief. I had very little affection for them.

Gorman readily found a type of tree whose springly limbs could be made into splendid bows, and to them he attached the thin vine-ropes he had learned to use in the Uglie village. He had the most difficulty finding adequate arrows. The Pinks would not do the work of carving them. However, he found a weed that maintained its toughness of stem some time after drying. It could be easily pulled from the ground, and the pointed root—being still moist—made a stout head. The Pinks had only to break off the top, trim a few root sprouts, and they had a serviceable arrow. They weren't too accurate, and they could seldom be used more than once for they splindered easily, but they were very abundant, and the Pinks always had a natural supply near at hand. Some of the more intelligent of them learned to put slivers of stone in the arrow heads, and made them into deadly weapons.

Then we sat back to wait. "One day soon a Pink will use his bow and arrow to defend himself against an attacking Uglie," Gorman said, "and their emancipation will begin."

LESS THAN a week later I found the bodies of two Uglies in the woods. A dozen arrows sprouted from their stomachs and legs. As the days went on I found more bodies. I hunted almost every day now. I still found no animals, and I suppose I had given hope of ever finding any, but I wanted to observe the results of Pastor Gorman's stratagem.

Another month went by while I saw few signs of the Uglies, and never a live one. And the Pinks were becoming more numerous. As a second month stretched to an end the Pinks seemed to literally pack into our clearing. Most of them appeared gaunt and hungry. Several times we returned to the woods to hunt for yams to feed them, but found only holes from which the vegetables had been taken. We saw also that the bark had been stripped from most of the trees. Often we observed Pinks pulling up small shrubs and knawing at the roots. They were always hungry now.

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One trip into the woods I went as far as the Uglie village, and what I saw sickened me. It was deserted. I found the bodies of children, and a few adults, lying in the huts. It was evident that they had starved to death.

When I returned to the ship I had lost much of my sympathy for Pastor Gorman and his religion. I told him what I had seen, and my conclusions. "Your scheme had resulted in mass homicide," I told him. "The Uglies have been wiped out."

He looked up, startled. "That can't be true," he protested.

"Have you seen an Uglie lately?" I asked.

"No, but..." He turned and went into the ship. I followed him and found him packing supplies.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To see if what you say is true."

I packed supplies of my own and followed him.

FOR EIGHT days we traveled along the big, muddy river. We found five villages of the Uglies. All were deserted, with the same signs of death I had observed before. Our last doubt was resolved.

The Uglie race had been obliterated!

On the way back to the ship we found more signs of starvation—starvation of the Pinks. Several times we found emaciated bodies.

In all our wandering we had still seen no animal, I reflected idly. Suddenly I had the answer. "This world has no animals—other than the Pinks and Uglies," I said, hearing the tone of awakened wonder in my own words.

"I know," Pastor Gorman answered dully. His shoulders were bowed, as though he carried a great weight. But I wondered if he really understood the situation here.

"The Pinks were the only source of food the Uglies had," I said. "They had to kill to survive."

"I know that too—now," he answered.

"Do you realize what you've done?" I asked, really angry with him for the first time. "You've killed off a noble race, to help a race of sneak thieves.

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And have you helped even them? Look around you. You've upset this world's ecological balance. Even the race you tried to help is due for starvation and wide-spread death."

"What you say is true," he agreed. His face was twisted in lines of dumb agony. "But where was I wrong? I had to do what I could to end that murder of the Pinks. The method I chose may have been unwise, but I know I was right to try to stop that wicked practice."

"Is the lion wicked because it must kill the antelope—if it is to survive, itself?" I asked. "Here we had the same situation, with the only difference being that the Uglies and the Pinks were more intelligent than the lions and the antelopes. Can you really feel that you are justified in what you did?"

He walked with his head back and his eyes closed tightly, and his face made a flinching grimace at my words. I had no need to goad him further. He had something within that was already serving him his punishment. And would probably continue to do so the rest of his life. He had only done what he *knew* was God's will. Yet...

I would not have wanted to face his conscience.

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for sale— super ears

by Louise Hodgson

Ken Preston was sure that he alone knew the inner secrets of his invention — yet, somehow, it had all been stolen from right under his nose. And he was being accused of blabbing . . .

IT ALL STARTED with Hi-Fi. You could buy a dozen name brands with absolutely faithful sound reproduction from 10 to 30,000 frequencies. Then J. B. Industries brought out a model flat to 40,000. Not to be outdone, Alpha Laboratories raised it to 50,000; Sound Syndics pushed it up to 60,000. Premier Products merely brought out a fancier cabinet.

The average ear being sensitive only between 20 and 20,000 frequencies, these high frequency systems didn't mean much, but they made good advertising. "You can *feel* the difference!" the ads ran.

About this time, Ken Preston, Chief Research Engineer of J. B. Industries, had a brilliant idea. Nature hadn't endowed man with much in the way of senses. Many animals could see, smell and hear circles around us; but man had a brain, and with it he could more than compensate for physical shortcomings. Not content with our puny eyesight, man devised the telescope and the microscope to bring the very far and the minute within our limited range of vision. Why

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not do the same for our hearing and bring a broader range of frequencies within our limits of audibility? Sound waves could be amplified. Could they be telescoped?

KEN STARTED experimenting with quartz-X. It had been considered about the most useless kind of quartz because, although extremely sensitive to sound vibrations, it invariably distorted them. Was there a pattern behind this distortion? Ken wondered; if there was, it could be controlled..

He worked feverishly, shaving, testing, filing, testing, curving, testing, heating, testing, chilling, testing. He tried quartz-X in thousands of thicknesses and contours, under dozens of conditions. The curve of the surface seemed to have a direct relationship to the distortion of the wave shape. As he gathered more data, the calculus indicated how he should form his curve; so he began to make his calculations on paper and verify them with an experimental model.

J. B., the president of the company, was beside himself with excitement. "This'll fix Alpha and Syndics!" he boomed. Then he cautioned Ken, "Secrecy. Absolute Secrecy. Nobody must know about this until we have our patent and are ready to go into production."

Ken didn't have to be told; he was too wrapped up in his project to talk to anyone. He didn't take time to read the papers, the magazines, or his personal mail. Even his technical journals were shoved aside for the moment. As he neared his goal, nothing else in life seemed important.

KEN WAS struggling to solve an equation that would remove the last troublesome resonance peak. Then the "Auditron" would be a reality. With an auditron placed over each ear, frequencies from 0 to 60,000 would be compressed into a smaller band like an accordian being closed up. Actual frequencies heard by the ear didn't mean as much as their ratio, their proportion. Sounds heard through the Auditron were like pictures reduced to a smaller scale.

The telephone rang. "Damn!" said Ken. "This in-

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fernal machine always interrupts me just when I'm getting somewhere."

The president's secretary was on the line. "J. B. would like to see you in his office right away."

"O.K. As soon as I get this equation. It shouldn't take over an hour or so," Ken answered.

"Oh no," she warned. "J B. wants you this instant."

"All right" Ken grumbled. He picked up his model Auditron and put it in his pocket. Not that he didn't trust anyone in the lab but he felt better if he had it with him all the time. The secret must not leak before the time was right.

Ken left the lab mumbling to himself. "He probably wants to know how soon I'll be finished. Rush, rush, rush! I've had no peace since I started this project. When will I get it finished—that's all they think. Business men can never seem to understand that a scientist just can't jump at conclusions. You have to test, experiment, verify. It takes time. If I didn't like the work so much, I'd resign!"

STILL MUTTERING to himself Ken walked past J. B.'s private secretary and into the inner sanctum. It didn't take a man of Ken's brains to see that something was wrong. J. B. was walking back and forth in front of the window his face purple with rage. The Vice President in Charge of Operations was pale and tense. The Chief Counsel looked very grave, and the Sales Manager was fidgeting his fingers around nervously.

Without a word J. B. handed Ken a copy of a magazine. In the center was a double page spread in full color. Ken turned pale as he read:

> *Premier Products Leads the Way Presenting the "Auditron" Your dog can hear high frequency sounds. Why can't you? Hear more, enjoy more, live a fuller life with the "Auditron" Coming Soon!*

"What do you make of that?" J. B. demanded.

"My idea!" Ken gasped. "Nick Brown—no, no!"

"Who the hell is Nick Brown?" thundered J. B.

"The Chief Engineer at Premier," Ken answered. "He was in my class at the University.

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I've known him for years."

"Is he as good as you are?" asked the Vice President in Charge of Operations.

"Don't be foolish," butted in the Sales Manager; "he can't be. Only one man graduates at the top of his class, doesn't he? Well, that's him," he said, pointing proudly to Ken.

"But he was good enough to develop the Auditron," added J. B. gloomily.

"I HARDLY think so, sir," Ken began cautiously; "Nick was a poor student; he barely got through. There was even some suspicion of his cheating on examinations, but nothing could ever be proved. Frankly I don't believe Nick Brown is capable of developing the Auditron."

"P r e m i e r. That's what stumped us too," said the Sales Manager. "If it had been Alpha or Syndics, we wouldn't have been surprised; now those two outfits keep us hopping. But all Premier has ever done is copy!"

J. B. turned on Ken menacingly. "Preston, you've been blabbing. I can see it all now. Probably called up this man Brown and d i s c u s s e d your theories with him. I told you the Auditron project was hush-hush! You damn scientists drive me crazy. Always writing monographs, speaking before scientific groups, asking colleagues their opinions, announcing discoveries, sharing information! You're all alike. So devoted to scientific truth, discovery, progress and all that stuff that you don't give a damn for the company that pays your salary."

"But, I didn't say a word to anyone," protested Ken.

"But you must have given a hint," broke in the Sales Manager. "They even called it by our name—the Auditron."

Ken was hurt. He *had* been loyal—and he didn't like their blaming him. "If that's the way you feel about it," he said quietly, "I'm through."

"WAIT A MINUTE, wait a minute, P r e s t o n. Don't be hasty," consoled J. B. "We can't do without you. All right, we take it all back. You didn't blab. It leaked out some other way. You *will* stay, won't

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you—and finish the Auditron?"

"All right then," Ken answered. He just couldn't walk out on the Auditron. It had been his baby from the first. And it was so near the finish, he *had* to see it through.

"Good," said the Chief Counsel. "Now let's look this situation over carefully and see what is to be done about Premier and their Auditron."

"We can get out a *better* Auditron than theirs," said the Vice President in Charge of Operations. "Preston, revise your specifications and raise the frequency limits. We'll beat them at their own game!"

"Hell, no!" interrupted the Sales Manager. "Don't waste time improving it. Get it out *faster* than they can! Isn't that what you think, J. B.?"

"That's right," the President announced firmly. "We're not licked! But we must act, and act fast. Preston, get back in your lab and finish this thing immediately. And you," he said, turning to the Chief Counsel, "get busy with the patents." "And you," he said, looking at the Sales Manager, "start working with our advertising agency, and get our dealers on board."

THE EXECUTIVES sprang from the room eagerly, but Ken walked slowly back to his lab. He picked up his calculations and tried to concentrate, but he couldn't keep his mind on his work. The figures danced around meaningless before him. All he could think of was Nick Brown. How did he get the Auditron?

"Pardon me, Mr. Preston," said the draftsman, "have you finished the equation? It's the only thing holding up that last specification sheet."

"You're getting to be as bad as old J. B.," Ken growled. "This one is tough, so please don't rush me!"

Ken filled his pipe, carefully tamped it down, lighted it and leaned back in his chair. He started to think about that last troublesome resonance peak, but soon his mind was back to Nick Brown. How did Nick get the information? Maybe he didn't steal it; maybe he had some smart engineers working for him. "I think I'll go for a walk," Ken said, as he slipped

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on his coat and headed for the door.

Half an hour later he was talking to the receptionist at Premier Products. "I want to see Mr. Nick Brown, the Chief Engineer," said Ken.

"Who are you? And do you have an appointment?" she asked.

"Never mind who I am, and I don't have an appointment. Just tell Mr. Brown an old friend would like to stop in and congratulate him. I'll only take a minute of his time."

She pushed a key and talked to the Chief Engineer. Then she turned to Ken. "Mr. Brown will see you, sir. He has a conference in ten minutes so can't spend much time with you though. His office is in Room 75."

Nick Brown greeted Ken with a composed smile. "Glad to see you, Preston," he said. "It's been a good many years, hasn't it?"

KEN HAD rather expected Nick to appear ill at ease, but that smooth smile covered any real feelings he might have had. However, Ken continued with his plan and began, "Nick, old man, I just saw the Premier ad about the Auditron. I could hardly believe it. Seems like Nick Brown has accomplished something after all, I said to myself. I want to congratulate you, Nick, on developing the Auditron. It's sensational, man! What ever gave you the idea?"

"Thanks, Preston," he answered with that maddening smile. "It's really rather simple with us in the Hi-Fi business, dealing with the physics of sound all the time. You know—you're in the field yourself. Making this equipment with sounds no one can hear, you've probably thought thousands of times yourself why not improve the ear to let people in on all these sounds they are missing."

"If it's no secret, Nick," Ken continued, "what are you using?"

"Well, now that it's in the papers and magazines, I guess we can let it out now. We use quartz-X. You know how it distorts sound waves."

"But how do you get them the way you want them?" Ken asked.

"It's all determined by the

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curvature. Very simple," Nick answered.

"Aren't you troubled by resonance?" Ken persisted.

"No, we make allowances for that. There are internal curves to counteract the peaks," explained Nick.

"I've done a little experimentation in that line myself," continued Ken. "That resonance peak at 36,000 stumped me; how did you lick that?"

"Same as the rest," answered Nick impatiently. Then he added with a smile, "I'm awfully sorry to have to leave you, old man, but I'm due at a conference right now. Thanks for coming over." Nick shook Ken's hand and hurried out of the room. Ken followed thoughtfully.

Ken was sure now. The specifications were stolen. Nick understood it all but that last equation Ken himself was still trying desperately to evolve. It wouldn't work like the others, Ken knew. Nick, however, blithly assumed it would.

BACK IN the lab, Ken looked the staff over. Were any of them spies for Premier? Most of them had been with J. B. Industries for years, and all seemed loyal and enthusiastic employees. He shook his head. No clues there.

He picked up his sheets and tried to resume his calculations, but thoughts wouldn't come. All he could think of was the fact that someone had stolen his idea and was going to get all the credit for it, while everyone looked upon him with suspicion. Sure they all apologized for arousing him, but Ken could sense that everyone of them—from J. B. on down—really suspected that he had blabbed. He had to prove he was innocent!

Then Ken made up his mind. He would steal the specifications back!

Ken had a friend who was a plumber. That night he surprised him by asking him to borrow his truck, tools and workclothes. Ken said he was going to a costume party and wanted every detail complete. So about ten-thirty that night he drove over to Premier Products. "I've come to fix that leak in the Sound Lab," he told the Plant Protection man.

Ken carried his toolbox up to Nick's lab. The outside door

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was not locked. That made it easy. He had come expecting to have to pick several locks, and concealed underneath his plumber's tools were all the necessary implements. He stepped into the room, shut the door quietly behind him, slipped on his model Auditron and flashed on his flashlight.

On a workbench was the beginning of a model Auditron, exactly like his own, though not so far developed. Ken cautiously kept his light below window level and looked for the blueprint files.

WEARING the Auditron, he could hear many and varied sounds that would have been inaudible to the human ear. Although he tried to walk as softly as possible, his footsteps gave a rich, crunching sound, and behind him rose echoes of where he had been. It was like adding another dimension, so alive seemed the very air around him. He could hear desks, tables, cabinets tremble in sympathetic vibration. Normal sounds like footsteps, seemed to be coming from another world. They were lower in pitch and seemed almost lost in the abundance of higher frequencies now audible to the ear.

But the brain is a remarkable machine, and before long it was making allowances for the telescoped scale of sound and familiar sounds once more sounded familiar—or nearly so. The pitch was interpreted as normal, for the frequencies still bore their same relative proportions, but each sound was richer, more distinct and individual, due to the presence of dozens of higher harmonics.

KEN FOUND the file that looked as if it might contain the specifications and drawings. As he suspected, it was locked; but the lock was a simple one, and even an amateur like himself could pick it with a little patience.

He worked on the lock slowly and methodically, trying to feel each indentation. He could hear the metal slide, resist and give. The unique union of feeling and sound gave him a sensation of absolute power. He could *hear* what his fingers felt. It made him almost giddy. If he had been a poet he could have described that sensation.

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Click! The lock opened, and a deafening pierce made his ears hurt. It was that lone unsolved resonance peak at 36,000 frequencies, and it passed through his entire body like an electric shock. Damn that peak! Everything was perfect but that!

Ken was jittery for a moment, before he realized that he was the only one who could hear the noise. To ordinary ears it was only silence.

He opened the drawer of the file and looked for the Auditron specifications. They *must* be there. He thumbed through plans for record players, radio receivers, hearing aids—yes, there they were! Ken pulled them out triumphantly. Never had the c r a c k l i n g of paper sounded so rich, so beautiful to Ken. He examined the sheets carefully. They were on a peculiar type of paper. It was so soft that his fingernails left an impression. Every word, every number, every symbol had dug into the paper, leaving its impression on the back. Ken saw the light—the backing paper on the drafting board! For every specification J. B. Industries had drawn, Premier Products had what amounted to a carbon copy! Ken hastily thumbed through the s t a c k. The last page was missing...

SUDDENLY he heard a sound. The elevator had stopped at the end of the hall and somebody had gotten out. They were coming towards the lab. With the Auditron, Ken could hear every step. As they drew nearer and nearer, he became panicky. What to do? He knew he ought to start the plumber's act, but fear paralyzed him so that he could only stand there gripping the specifications as the footsteps drew nearer and nearer.

The door opened, the lights flashed on, and there stood Nick Brown. "You thief!" he screamed.

"I...er...eh..." Ken began nervously, but couldn't think of anything to say to improve matters, so he shut up.

"Stealing my plans for the Auditron, are you?" Nick's big, angry voice reverberated with the extra harmonics. "You sneak! I'll have you arrested. I'll call the police. You'll be sent to jail for breaking and entering—and theft!"

Then he lowered his voice to

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a sinister, insinutating whisper. "Preston, you're through. When this gets around to the scientific societies, you're ruined. Trying to steal from a competitor just because you're not smart enough to develop a product yourself! You'll never be able to get another job after this. We'll make J. B. Industries look sick when this gets out too. Might as well put those Auditron specifications back. They won't do you any good."

THEN NICK spotted the Auditron Ken was wearing. "And give me back my model," he continued.

"Why you crazy liar!" Ken broke out. "This model is mine and so are these specs. You know that as well as I do, Nick Brown!"

"You can't *prove* it," Nick replied and flashed that sickening, insincere smile of his.

Ken staggered. Nick was right. He had certainly made an ass of himself; he was ruined. He had meant to help but had only made matters worse. J. B. could never bring out the Auditron now—not after Premier's advance publicity, and Nick Brown's proof that J. B's Chief Research Engineer had stolen the specs. Any moment Nick would call in the police. Then exposure, jail, disgrace. Yet Nick just stood there like an imbecile, smiling and prolonging the torture.

"I'm sorry, Ken, old man," Nick began in a strange kind tone. "I didn't mean to shake you up so. Do you think I would ruin an old classmate, an old friend of mine? You did hundreds of favors for me at school, helped me cram for the electronics and advanced math courses. No, I will protect you. I will cover up for you."

"Thanks, Nick, I..."

"This is just between us, Preston," said Nick in a half-friendly, half-threatening tone. "You'll be safe because no one else will know about what you did tonight. But I'm warning you—J. B. Industries had better not copy our Auditron. We'll sue your company and release your story to the press. Understand?"

"Yeah, I see," Ken mumbled. "Thanks, pal."

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HOME IN bed, Ken turned and tossed. Wild thoughts raced through his head. Would Nick keep his promise? How was that for lousing things up for your company? Why had Nick suddenly become kind-hearted and forgiving? It wasn't like him. "Maybe," Ken said to himself, "he wanted something from me. Blackmail? Or maybe he wanted that last equation!"

"Of course. How dumb of me not to realize!" Ken exclaimed half aloud. "He can't formulate it himself. All right, by golly, I'll give him that last equation!" And with his mind finally at ease, Ken dropped off to sleep.

The next morning he came into the lab late. He whistled as he walked into the room, winked at the steno and slapped the draftsman on the back. Then he sat down at his desk and began making furious calculations with his slide rule. He covered sheet after sheet with figures, rejecting, changing, adjusting.

Finally, with a look of pride and satisfaction, he took the last sheet of paper over to the draftsman. "Well, my boy, it's finished at last. Here's the equation that almost had me stumped," Ken announced, "and I've solved the applications here so you can finish up that last spec sheet." Then he grinned, "Don't waste any time. I think J. B.'s in a hurry."

The draftsman answered politely, "Thank you, Mr. Preston." Then he went happily to work.

"I think I'll take a walk," Ken said, as he lighted his pipe and headed for the door. "Haven't had any fresh air since this project started."

ON THE way out, Ken stuck his head in J. B.'s office. "It's finished. Last specification page being drawn up now."

"What? Splendid!" J. B. roared. "We'll get busy on the patents and start tooling up right away. Got to get it out before Premier does!"

"No hurry, J. B." said Ken with a smile. "Premier will *never* bring out the Auditron. Not after that last equation I doped out for them to steal. It *added,* not subtracted, resonances—dozens of them."

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"What did you say?"

"I said there's no hurry. Give them time to steal that one, too; then fire that draftsman. After that, I'll give you the *real* solution."

J. B. laughed, and his eyes twinkled as he said, "I guess I ought to call up the President of Premier Products and thank him for the free advance publicity of the Auditron."

Readin' and Writhin'

(*continued from page 78*)

amusing stuff, but the constant tease aspect palls after a while. So, for that matter, does the novel itself. It's a good job, in a lightweight way; and even though it doesn't rank with the more substantial novels Anderson is producing today, it's a commendable addition to the Avalon line, and worthy of investigation. Incidentally, the hand of the expurgator is much less in evidence here than it has been in past productions of this publisher.

FIVE GALAXY SHORT NOVELS, edited by H. L. Gold. Doubleday, $3.95.

Supplementing the recent *Galaxy Readers* is this anthology of five stories in the 15-20,000-word length, the "novella" that editor Horace Gold has used so successfully in his magazine. All five date from the 1951-54 era.

"Tanglehold," by F. L. Wallace (1953) is a taut, tightly-written thriller, notable more for the solidity and believability of its background details than for any novelty of plot. The furniture, the gimmicks and gadgets, the utensils and accessories of Wallace's world are handled with admirable vividness. The story itself is a good chase yarn, ending up in a tangle of counterplotting that doesn't entirely convince.

"World Without Children," by Damon Knight (1951) also demonstrates the virtue of the novella form by the richness of its background texture. The situation is not unfamiliar: with immortality achieved, humanity has locked into a cultural stasis. The plot—involving underground organizations, rope-ladder escapes, and the

[*Turn To Page* 122]

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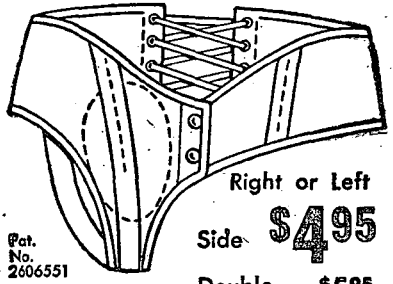

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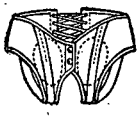

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like—would probably sound foolish in summary, but Knight's dazzling technique and effortlessly limpid prose prove that even the hoariest of plots can come brightly to life in the hands of a craftsman.

"Wherever You May Be," by James E. Gunn (1953) is easily the best in this collection, and is besides a genuine rarity in science fiction: one of the handful of stories that has real emotional depth. It's about a studious young man who retreats to the Ozarks to finish a thesis, and encounters a youthful backwoods poltergeist who refuses to disentangle herself from his life. What follows is funny, touching, heart-warming, and absolutely delightful; every word rings true, every situation is compellingly visualized. Outstanding.

"Mind Alone," by J. T. McIntosh (1953) suffers a bit from the company it keeps. It's a bland, slick tale of a bunch of nice people named Muriel and Peter and Barbara; Muriel may or may not be an alien spy, does not know herself, and tries hard to find out. Eventually she succeeds—but at least one reader wasn't terribly concerned about the whole thing. Pleasant reading for a hot

[*Turn To Page* 124]

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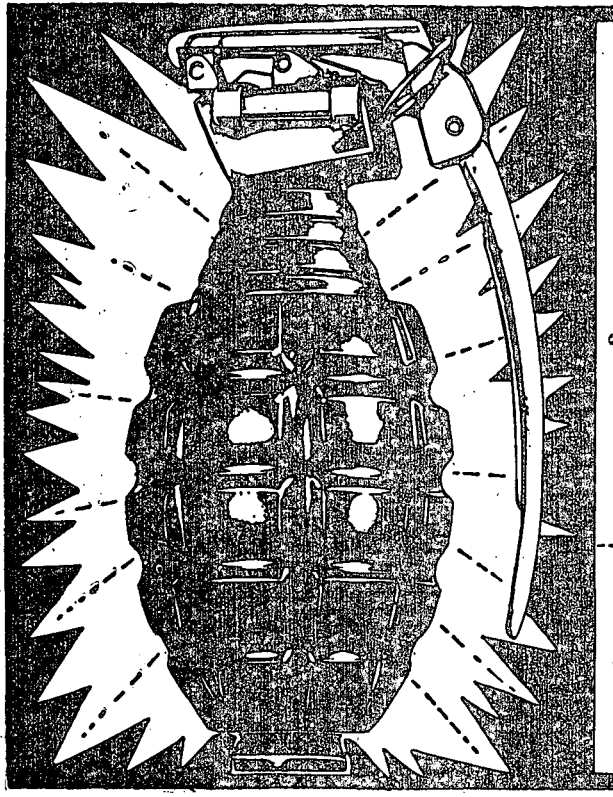

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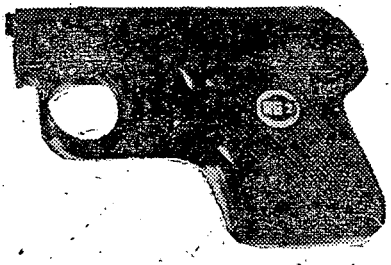

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summer day with plenty of Tom Collinses on hand, that's about all.

"Granny Won't Knit" by Theodore Sturgeon (1954) portrays a future society held in stasis by the handy availability of the matter transmitter. Sturgeon sets forth his society beautifully, down to the tiniest details; the story is marred for me by excessive cuteness and preciousness, but others may not feel the same way. Sturgeon's formidable Granny seems beyond belief to me, but a rip-roaring Victorian-style father is depicted with hair-raising accuracy. Psionics is tangentially involved in this one, as in the Gunn.

NO PLACE ON EARTH, by Louis Charbonneau. Doubleday, $2.95.

This thin, second-hand novel by a California script-writer does little credit to the Doubleday s-f reputation. It's a reviewer's duty to wade through a poor book in search of some virtue, and duty was done here—but the only merit I could find was the radio-writer's knack for fast-moving dialogue. Otherwise, it was close to a total loss.

[*Turn To Page* 126]

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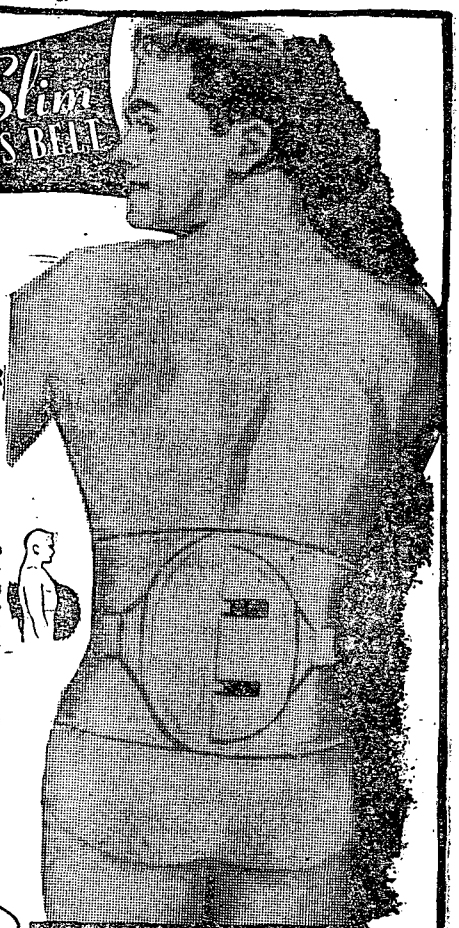

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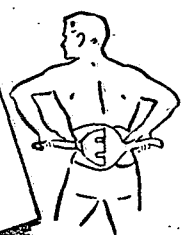

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The story, set in some unspecified future era, is a muzzy rehash of *"1984"*, with added overtones of *"Darkness at Noon"* thrown in. The world is ruled by a vaguely-described Leader who imposes Malthusian population control on all but a select group of aristocrats; naturally, there is an Underground, a Villainous Interrogator, a stiffly-depicted Hero Who Rebels, and—you take it from there. Every expectable cliche is present, including the standard plot business of the couple who defy the Leader by having a child, and all the foolish chases and flashbacks. The prose is brittle and undistinguished, the backgrounds dim, the characters all ciphers without substance. This one leaves a sour taste; it's a stale, dreary, predictable job.

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RALPH 124C41+, by Hugo Gernsback. Crest Books, 35¢.

A while back another firm gave us Doc Smith's *"Skylark of Space"*, and now here is an even older and creakier "masterpiece" —Gernsback's 1911 epic of life in the 2660. It's strictly cornball from any critical standard whatever, but I have to confess that it does make lively reading, in a quaint sort of way. It's hard not to be patronizing about this book, with its noble hero, lilywhite heroine, and vile villain. But much of the scientific and sociological speculation is amazingly keen, whatever failings the book's narrative technique may have. Call it a period piece; it's good fun if not taken too seriously.

I'm thankful that Fletcher Pratt's introduction has been retained in the paperback edition; it would have been dreadful if the publishers had calmly foisted *Ralph* off on the newsstand public without explanation, as an allegedly brand-new representative of contemporary science fiction.

[*Turn Page*]

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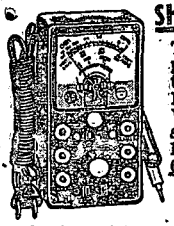

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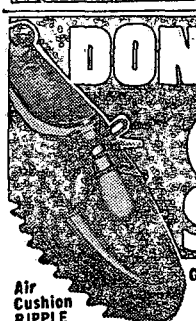

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This story of a handful of misfits and their strange star-flight attracted remarkably little attention when it first appeared. I found it fascinating then, and still do. Recommended.

SATELLITE E ONE, by Jeffery Lloyd Castel. Bantam, 35¢.

The Sputnik foofaraw is doubtlessly responsible for the exhumation of this 1954 British novel. It purports to be the first-person recollections of an early space pioneer who aided in the building of the first manned satellite. There are several switches of narrator, but the tone throughout is a remorselessly pedantic one. Somehow, despite this, a clear and impres-

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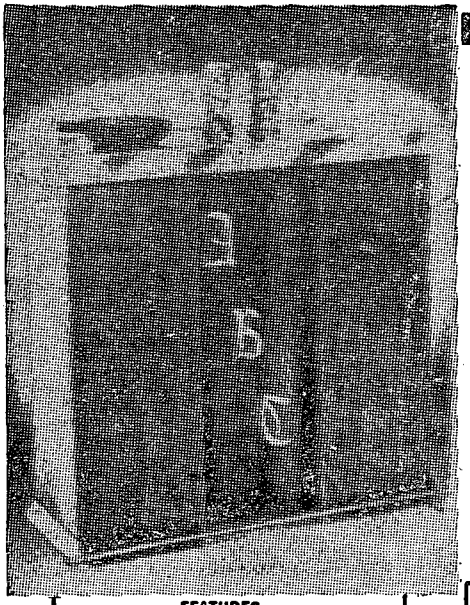

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sive picture of life aboard a manned space satellite emerges. The book is mercilessly dull, ponderously slow-moving; its meticulous detail-work rescues it and makes it worth reading anyway.

NO BLADE OF GRASS, by John Christopher. Pocket Books, 25¢

Last year's sensational *Saturday Evening Post* s-f serial, shortly to be filmed—the convincing, chilling story of a world whose civilization has crumbled overnight. Smooth, crisp, and consistently entertaining—with the accent on *people,* not gadgetry.

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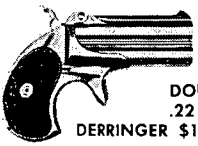

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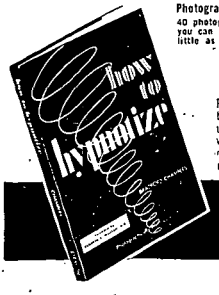

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